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The Organ of the National Council of Labour Colleges

THE PLEBS

I can promise to be candid but not impartial.

Vol. XVI

March, 1924.

No. 3

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ONE THOUSAND UP

LAST MONTH the circulation of The PLEBS went up by just over a thousand. That is not only clear evidence that the reduction in price is popular, but it shows also that our friends are tackling the job of sending our circulation still higher.

We tender our hearty thanks to all our supporters who helped in securing this encouraging result. But we must repeat what we stated two months ago, in announcing the decision to reduce the price to 4d. : we need a *fifty per cent. increase in circulation* if the magazine is to pay its way at the new figure. Last month's increase is equivalent to a twenty per cent. advance. We want another 1,500 readers, and we want them as speedily as possible.

There are, as we mentioned last month, some 17,000 students enrolled in N.C.L.C. classes this year. We want a circulation of at least half that number for The PLEBS. We therefore again ask, not only Literature and Class Secretaries, *but every one of our individual readers*, to put their shoulders to the wheel and help us in realising our aim. Whether by penny-a-week instalment schemes or any other means, get a PLEBS Push going in your district. See to it that Labour Party workers and keen Trade Unionists in every industry, as well as class-students, are afforded an opportunity of buying the Magazine. Let them know—what is perfectly true—that The PLEBS is not a “parish” magazine, in the sense of appealing only to a small section of workers, with highly specialised interests; but that it aims at being a journal of interest to every class-conscious member of the Labour movement. Point out the vital importance to the movement of the educational work now being undertaken by the Labour Colleges, and urge that the very least that any Labour enthusiast can do, if unable to take any active part in the class-work, is to support the movement to the extent of subscribing to its Magazine.

Lastly—please pay promptly! It is very difficult, in the case of a movement like ours, depending so largely on voluntary support and work, to make cast-iron rules about length of credit. If our friends will bear in mind that we have to settle with our printers monthly, we should prefer to leave to their consciences the question of their settlement with us. But please, comrades—*have* a conscience! Neither a magazine nor a movement can carry on without an economic basis. For ours, we depend on you.

We have just reprinted the *Psychology* Textbook; and the *Geography* book has sold so quickly that we shall need to put a second edition in hand quite soon. This means further cash liabilities; which we can only meet if our friends will pay up quickly for the books with which we have recently supplied them. Please don't wait for the office (at an additional cost of postage) to remind you of your account. Remember that *our* business is *your* business; and prove to the doubters that a workers' organisation carried on without thought of “divi's” for anyone can not only pay its way, but accumulate funds with which to develop and extend its work.

SPECIAL NOTICE

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A WORD

from ROBERT SMILLIE

The following letter, sent on to us by the secretary of the Ashington Federated Miners' Tutorial Class (North-Eastern Labour College), was written by Robert Smillie to the class after the General Election. A word of encouragement from Smillie will be treasured by N.C.L.C.ers everywhere, and we leave it to them to make full use of this letter when seeking to win the support of their fellow Trade Unionists for Independent Working-Class Education.

House of Commons.

16th January, 1924.

DEAR COMRADE,—I greatly appreciated the energetic and enthusiastic work done by the members of the A.F.M.T.C. during my Election campaign, and I should like to take this opportunity of expressing my very hearty thanks to them for all they did. I realise the great importance of the work being done in these educational classes, and desire to express my sincere hope that the young men and women of the various districts of Morpeth Division will take advantage of the opportunities thus given them, and give encouragement to those who at very great sacrifice are carrying on the work.

I am,

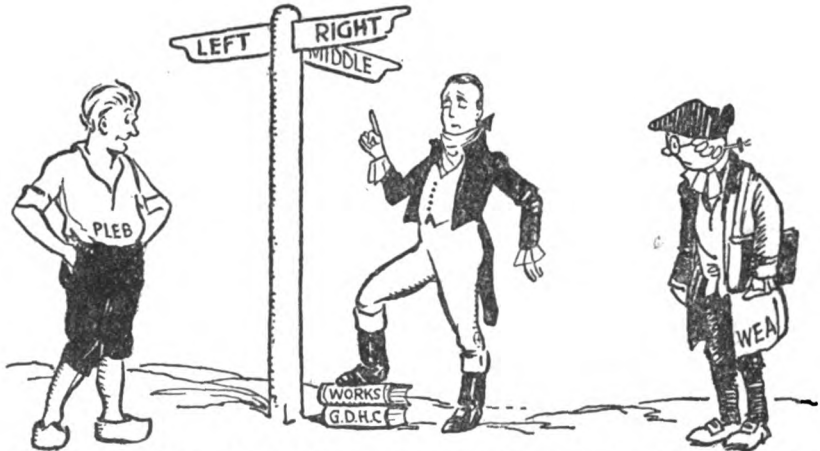
Yours fraternally,

ROBT. SMILLIE.

Mr. COLE'S "MIDDLE WAY"

FOR a long time now—to be precise, ever since the Plebs League was founded fifteen years ago—there has been a perfectly definite "issue" as regards the question of working-class education in this country. That issue is neither obscure nor unimportant. It is, in fact, a *class* issue, for it raises the whole question of independent working-class action, in every sphere, *versus* any kind of co-partnership with Labour's enemies. On the one hand, the Labour Colleges and the Plebs League stand for Independence; for an education based on the fact of the class struggle, and aimed at serving as a weapon in that struggle. On the other, the Workers' Educational Association stands for the principle of "social solidarity," for "contact" between classes as a sufficient cure for any (temporary) antagonism

of interests, and for making governing-class "culture" more accessible to proletarians. At one time or another a good many secondary matters have been raised by individuals on either side. But the broad question at issue has always been, and is, perfectly clear—and this despite the fact that the W.E.A., by a "re-arrangement" of watchwords and the establishment of subsidiary organisations (with new names but under the old management) has tried to obscure it.

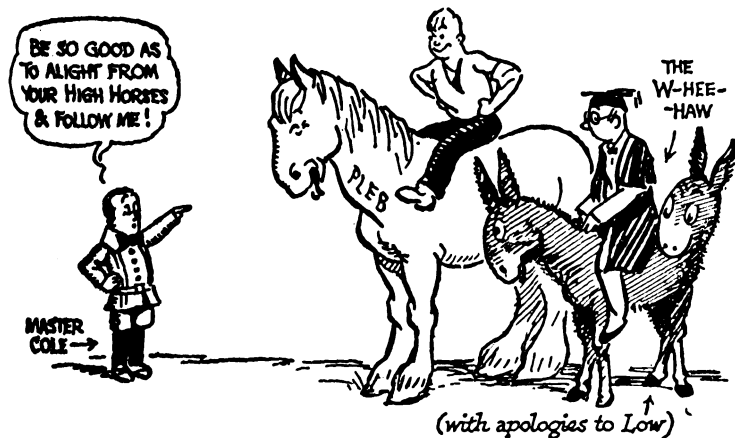


Mr. Sidney Carton Cole:—"It is a far, far better way that I tread, &c. &c."

Mr. G. D. H. Cole has for some years been a notable pillar of the W.E.A., and an equally prominent critic of the Labour College movement. But recently he has apparently been feeling less and less comfortable among his erstwhile friends. He has criticised the W.E.A. for its lack of any precise educational aim. He has insisted, in flat opposition to the W.E.A. watchword of "impartiality," on the need for the workers' educational movement to become an integral part of the organised Labour movement. He has openly criticised, in the official organ of the W.E.A., the methods of the ordinary University tutors and their attitude towards working-class students. He has, in fact, at one time or another, adopted—or adapted—pretty nearly every one of the Plebs' slogans. He has finally established a monthly organ of his own which pays The PLEBS the compliment of imitating it fairly closely both in general format and in the character of various features, and which is expressly announced to be a "journal of Workers' Control in politics, industry, and education."

What he has *not* done is to make clear just why, since he is so convinced a believer in independent working-class action and has to so

great an extent admitted the rightness of the Pleb point of view, he has not done the simple and obvious thing—and joined the Plebs League. Membership of the League is open to all who subscribe to its main tenet—"Education as a means towards the abolition of capitalism." There is no sort of "party" bar—or qualification; many members of the political organisation to which we believe Mr. Cole belongs—the I.L.P.—are keen Plebs. Nor is any sort of rigid uniformity as regards political or theoretical opinions insisted on (apart, that is, from the broad principle of working-class independence); the League includes workers who differ considerably as to immediate tactics, though they are united in general aim. Further, the League, and the Labour College movement which it exists to support, have surely now been long enough in existence to have earned the right to stand as the organisations definitely embodying the very ideas about working-class education which Mr. Cole is now advocating—or appearing to advocate—to Trade Unionists. Why, then, we repeat, since he is so dissatisfied with the W.E.A., does he not come over and join us?



Instead of that, he has invented and patented, or is about to invent and patent, a new "Middle Way" of his own. For the past two or three months he has been alternating, in his journal, criticism of the W.E.A. with facetiousness—in prose and verse—about the Plebs League. Both organisations have been adjured to "come down off their high horses"—presumably as a preliminary to lining up behind Mr. Cole. Just *why* they should do this was not specified. Perhaps Mr. Cole's need to be commander-in-chief of something was taken for granted. Anyway, no more precise details about the "Middle Way" are available than can be gathered

from the following item, described as "A Fable," which appeared in the February number of Mr. Cole's magazine :—

A Plebs Leaguer and a W.E.A.er set off for Paradise together.

By and by they came to a place where two roads diverged.

There was a sign with two finger-posts. The first said "To Paradise, by the Broad Highway." The other said "Bridle Track to Paradise, *via* Marx."

They disputed for some time which way they should take. As they could not agree as to the road, they agreed to part.

The W.E.A.er took the Broad Highway.

The Plebs Leaguer kept to the left, along the Bridle Track.

By and by, the Highway got so broad that the W.E.A.er lost his way, and wandered about with no idea where he was.

By and by, the Bridle Track, winding along a high hill, got so narrow that the Plebs Leaguer lost his head, and fell off into the abyss.

That was the end of them.

STOP PRESS NEWS. Owing to grave inconvenience to the public, caused by the unsatisfactory state of the roads to Paradise, it has been decided to make a new straight road, swerving neither to right nor to left, and broad enough to take all traffic with ease. The making of this road will provide much useful work for the unemployed. It has not yet been settled whether it will receive grant aid from the Government.

[ADVT. *Issued by the League for Common-Sense in Working-Class Education—L.C.W.C.E.*]

We are not sure whether this little effort is to be regarded as an example of the "turbulence of wit" which, elsewhere in his journal, Mr. Cole pleads for as a desirable characteristic of a "fighting paper." You are free to make what you can of it. For our part we admit we cannot make much—unless it be that Mr. Cole's wish is father to Mr. Cole's thought in the matter of the Plebs Leaguer falling over into the abyss. But in that little matter we can assure him that his Fable is not likely to come true. If the "Bridle Track" is getting in any sense too "narrow" it is only because of the steadily increasing crowd which is pressing along it. And they are not bound for "Paradise," either, but for something much more material.

We, again, ask Mr. Cole to tell us just why a "Middle Way" is needed, and, since he has frequently regretted the multiplicity of "roads" when there were only two of them, to explain why he considers that the situation would be improved by the cutting of another. And we urge Trade Unionists to ask him the same questions.

They might also ask him why in the name of common-sense he does not quit sitting on the fence and come down with both feet on the working-class side?

J. F. H.

PLEBS LEAGUE SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1924 ARE NOW DUE. SEND YOUR SHILLING TO HON. SEC., PLEBS, 162a BUCKINGHAM PALACE RD., LONDON, S.W.1.

THE IDES OF MARCH

Germany in Transition. By M. Philips Price (Labour Publishing Co. 5s.).

NOT only is it difficult to escape memories of the Commune of 1871 (when reminded by the calendar of the approach of the 18th of March), but they have grown directly topical by a swift combination of events.

A Labour Government has taken office (as a Minority Administration) in Britain : Lenin, the embodiment of the revolutionary will of the triumphant Russian workers and peasants, has been borne to the tomb amid scenes of devotion quite without parallel ; Britain and Italy each " recognise " the Soviet Republic ; Poincaré, his hand on his heart and his eye on the tape-machine, counts the days before the elections which will send him off the stage and threaten his tenure of the box-office : every day brings us a fresh rumour of an armed insurrection by the German Communists—now driven " underground." If the Bolshevik Revolution and Russia stand to Europe as Paris and its Commune stood to France, then the whole of Europe seems approaching its Whit Sunday—this time *perhaps* " with a difference."

Philips Price has already told us the story of the Russian Revolution, and told it in a fashion that brings out all the thrill of alternating crisis and accomplishment. The Soviet Republic lives—a newer and vaster Commune. The question is still unsettled whether Europe at large will be conquered by the " Thiers," " Bismarcks " and " Porceaugnacs." But of one thing there is no question. Should they win—should the Reaction secure a definitive triumph throughout the rest of Europe—the days of the Revolution are numbered—even in Russia. We have the uncanny experience of living through a process whose end we have seen in a dream, grappling with details we imperfectly comprehend, and tortured all the time by a fear lest the dream—through some neglect or bungle on our part—should prove prophetic.

Price tells the story of the German Revolution feelingly, critically, analytically and lucidly. If the reader feels on laying his book down that it is not so good as his *Reminiscences of the Russian Revolution*, it will be a tribute to his even greater skill. He will have conveyed to the reader the unspoken suggestion, immanent in the whole book, that the experience of the German proletariat from November, 1918, till to-day, constitutes a tragedy even greater than the triumph of the proletariat in Russia. And what is more : that, such is the nature

of capitalism to-day, it may serve but as the prelude to vaster tragedies still—inflicted upon the workers of France, Britain and the U.S.A.

There is (it has been remarked before !) a time for everything—even for football, fine art and Mrs. Philip Snowden. But now is not the time for optimism as to the immediate future of the British working class. *Because* Soviet Russia is recognised and *because* a Labour Government is in office the task of the Labour Movement has acquired a complexity out of all proportion to the methods and expectations to which it had grown accustomed.

The Soviet Republic as an officially recognised thing will be indistinguishable in the eyes of the newspaper-fed mass from any other State : a thing to which one must “ hats off ” or “ punish ” or “ make pay ” as the case may be. While the Labour Government (peers and knights added to its collection of Right Honourables) may easily provide in its new Court costumes (marked down to £18 at enormous sacrifice—and significantly lacking the sword) a perfect camouflage behind which the Counter-Revolution masses its storm troops for a push that will destroy our hopes for a generation.

The essence of the danger lies in the fact that the Labour Government holds Office without Power—exactly as the Social-Democrats led by Schiedemann, Ebert and Noske took office without power in Germany.

They had been so “ great,” these German Social-Democrats. While the Socialist and Labour Parties of other countries had to struggle on with a few thousands of members the great German Social-Democracy numbered its members by hundreds of thousands and its voters by millions. Every year seemed to bring nearer the moment when by the mere lapse of time its snowball-like expansion would obliterate Kaiserdom and Junkerdom and make Germany the first Socialist Republic in the world.

Then came the war and the appalling, heart-breaking process of disillusionment. The “ snowball,” exposed to the Imperialist *flammenwerfer*, revealed its muddy soul and collapsed into the unsavoury thing that after following its Kaiser for longer than even Junkerdom deemed credible, sat palsied in the seats of office while the Junker guards “ saved society ” from the *Spartakus-bund* and beat out the brains of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. After 25,000 German workers have been slaughtered in three bloody uprisings against the régime nominally presided over by the Social-Democracy, the military agents of the industrial and financial dictators of Germany (who have held the real power all the time Ebert, Schiedemann and Co., have been anchored in their arm-chairs) find Social-Democracy no longer necessary even as a camouflage.

Flung from their bureaus and their ministerial benches the Social-

Democrats (their millions of voters discounted like inflated marks into the cold units of actuality) are rescued from annihilation beneath an avalanche of universal hatred and contempt only so far as they are included in the proscriptions of the military dictators. To one, and one only, straw can they cling to save them from sinking to the bottom of the foulest bog in the deepest hell. They are still friends with the British Labour Party. It is not impossible that the new knights and peers of the once-despised British Party may be called upon before long to help drag the *ci-devant* Marxists and *quondam* Revolutionists of German Social-Democracy from beneath the trampling feet of the armies of Revolution and Counter-Revolution.

If this were all it would be enough to excite the interest of the most jaded. But there is more, much more !

We can see now—now that it is all but too late—that the crimes of Otto Wels and Hugo Noske were potential in the composition of the German Social-Democracy as far back as the nineties. The theoretical divisions which arose in and around Bernstein's "Revisionism" were things which we were wont to treat as merely incidental to the dialectical development of the Marxian philosophy. Price (in the almost perfect concluding section of his book) shows that they were the objective expression of fundamental social divisions—that the adoption of the common denomination of "Marxist" served only to embitter to the point of slaughter the fundamental class-antagonisms that the policy of Social-Pacifism sought always to explain out of existence.

The British Labour Party so far as it has any theoretical unity at all is chiefly anti-Marxist and pro-Revisionist. It is overwhelmingly Social-Pacifist—angry to the point of fury at the suggestion of "class-war." Its sympathies are thus bespoken in advance for Ebert, Schiedemann, Noske, Wels and Co. How little this is likely to save them and their followers from manhandling at the hands of a British *Fascisti* after a prolonged and scientific sabotage from the Federation of British Industries can be imagined best by those who have studied (with Philips Price's invaluable aid) the procedure of the Coal and Iron Kings of Germany and the rise and progress of the German *Fascisti*.

The famished and tortured German proletariat—whose anguish drives them towards the gun and the barricade with a force almost exactly balanced by the hunger-debility that robs them of the strength to struggle—stand before us more as a warning than an appeal. Heresy hunting is a depraved and degrading pursuit at the best of times, but we must not let our appreciation of that fact blind us to the need for extending and intensifying among the rank-and-file of the Labour Party as much as possible of a general understanding of the proved laws of social development. It is these rank-and-file

masses who will bear the brunt, and they have a right to be warned of the dangers ahead.

The least dramatic among us could be forgiven for being alarmed at the prospect. The incurable romanticism which clings to the belief in the saving grace of sweet reasonableness as a means of making expropriation at once pleasant to the expropriated and profitable to the expropriator is entrenched upon the Treasury Bench. The repudiation of Marxism and "class-war dogma" may have been at one time a harmless (if unimpressive) pose. It may become (let the battered corpses of Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg bear witness) the most brutal and demoralising of creeds. When, years ago, Bernard Shaw spoke of "that inferior variety of Lloyd-Georgism known as German Social-Democracy" we were horrified. We knew only that those he slighted gave outward reverence to the name of Marx and we took the rest on trust. To take such things on trust nowadays is criminal.

It is not enough to wag our heads gravely in the direction of Eccleston Square and to mutter "fie! fie!" as knight succeeds unto baron in the Labour hierarchy and minor lights intrigue for the posts of Lord Chamberlain of the Royal Household and the reversion to the hereditary Wardship of the Kitchen Fire-irons. Are we of the Left Wing adequate to the task of compelling an amendment? Does even the quality of our Marxism leave nothing to seek?

It is melancholy to reflect that almost every reader of Price's book will gain his first knowledge of Rosa Luxemburg's contributions to the development of the theory of Marxism from his pages. Why have these things never been translated into English?

I fear there is only one answer—we have been accustomed to using Marx as a decorative badge to wear; we have yet to acquire the will to use him as an instrument for producing definite social and political results. It would be a wonderful thing, and practical beyond praise, could we compel an adjournment of the House of Commons until the whole of the 192 Labour Members had read and marked, not to say inwardly digested, the analyses given by Price of the economic interests that in their totality constitute the entities we know as "France" and "Germany" and of the whole aftermath of the German Revolution of 1918. It could not fail to have some effect. But it would and will be ten thousand times more important to get the facts he sets out known and appreciated at their worth by the widest possible mass of the British workers.

Here is work that Plebs can and must do. Arm-chairs have a fascination few can resist; but with a Mill's bomb under the seat they lose much if not all of their charm. It is not enough for us to understand history better than anybody else. We have Marx's own warrant for saying that "*the important thing is to change it.*" And

unless every ounce of energy be devoted to the task, and that speedily, there is grave reason to fear that the fate of the Commune of '71 will overtake the Proletarian Revolution that began in Russia in 1917 and whose second chapter has left the German workers prostrate and all but destroyed.

We will have to write the third chapter whether we will it or no. How are we going to write it?

THOS. A. JACKSON.

The REVIVAL of TRADES COUNCILS

THE interesting articles in the February PLEBS discussed the above subject in general terms. It may be bad logic to reason from a particular to the general, yet the following brief survey of the history and work of a particular Trades Council in the West Riding of Yorkshire may bring the discussion down to more concrete points.

The "X" Trades Council was some years ago one of the "talking shops" or smoking clubs mentioned by H. Drinkwater. It also passed through the evolutionary process he accurately describes—although he is wrong with his date; it was at least ten years prior to 1918 that the Local Labour Party, actually consisting of the ultra-political element of the I.L.P., "gobbled up" this Council. About the same time there was in existence a local branch of the S.D.F. or S.D.P. which, like many of the national leaders of its organisation, looked upon the Trades Council members as ignorant trade unionists, much below the standard required for membership of such revolutionary organisations as theirs.

Into the midst of these diverse groups a young man from the newly formed Central Labour College hurled a bombshell by declaring (1) that the Trades Councils were on a wrong tack; (2) the Labour Party was simply playing political opportunism; (3) the S.D.P. were becoming intellectual prigs. Then commenced a series of studies on the basic principles of the working-class movement and how to apply theory to practice and practice to theory.

The students began to realise that the Trades Council, being the meeting centre of the industrial workers, must be made the pivot of the working-class activity of the town; the three main functions to be the supplying of the educational, political and industrial needs of the workers. Then commenced a series of struggles within the Council. The W.E.A.ers fought tenaciously for the W.E.A. to supply the educational needs, but eventually the supporters of Independent Working-Class Education won the day. The struggle

against the purely political "gobblers" was more severe. A complete change in the Council's constitution was decided upon, but at the last meeting under the old regime a determined effort was made to kill this by voting fifty pounds (the whole of the Council's funds) to the Labour Party. The vote went in favour, and the pioneers of the new constitution were left to commence their work without funds.

Labour at this time had about ten representatives on the Town Council, and these representatives, once elected, refused to obey mandates of the Trades Council, claiming the right to use their own judgment. After a good deal of bitter discussion, the Trades Council repudiated them as Labour's representatives. This was during the war, and (independently of the repudiated individuals) good work was carried on by direct delegation from the Trades Council on Food, Vigilance, Pensions and other Committees.

The position at present is that the T.C. reserves the right under its constitution either to nominate persons for public position through the L.P. (to which body it affiliates by an annual subscription) or to run a candidate direct from its own ranks. This means that the industrial section of the workers keeps its independence and power and can if it so decides (which it usually does) work in harmony with the political section of the movement. The result has been phenomenal successes at the polls, the industrial section taking part either because the candidate is one from their own ranks, or one of the L.P.'s choice with whom they have expressed satisfaction. On the other hand this arrangement has prevented the putting forward of any political candidate not acceptable as a trade unionist.

This use of the workers' industrial power over their political section through the Trades Council has been too much neglected in the past. It should present to the progressive section of the workers one of the strongest arguments in favour of a Trades Councils revival. It is in the industrial field, however, that the greatest achievements have been made and the strength of the Council been best applied. Even after the Labour representatives on the Town Council have been unable to get redress for municipal employees, their case has been taken up by the Trades Council and satisfactorily settled in their interests. Negotiations with other employers have been also satisfactorily carried through, a mere threat from an organisation composed of the industrial workers of the town being sufficient to compel an employer to listen to the men's case.

There is another factor which supports the argument for maintaining a strong Trades Council. It has been found that the more numerous the Labour representatives on municipal bodies, the greater the tendency is for them to form into a separate group inside the Party, becoming almost dictators of the policy of the party locally. This can be counteracted by the Trades Council deciding

if necessary to bring its industrial power to bear against any political caucus. The Trades Councils must keep this principle always in view—*values are produced in the workshop; therefore the industrial workers must keep control of their political instrument.*

To suggest the abolition of the Trades Councils would be to hand over the whole movement to the political chiefs. Mr. Drinkwater may call the Councils “talking shops”; but what other local centre is there for the workers in different occupations? The debates and discussions in the Trades Council referred to in this article have been often of a very useful character. Always during a dispute the Trade Union affected is given the opportunity to ask for support of all the others by giving a full statement of its case.

I trust that, even in this short article, I have said enough to prove the urgent need of a general revival of the Trades Councils as invaluable weapons in the working-class struggle for power.

TRADES COUNCIL PRESIDENT.

Philips Price's “REMINISCENCES of the RUSSIAN REVOLUTION”

An Announcement

SINCE The PLEBS cheap edition of this great book was sold out we have had numerous inquiries for copies from comrades who either made up their minds too late to secure the book, or who did not hear of our offer until after it had been closed.

We are glad to announce that we have been able to arrange with the publisher for a further limited edition, *subject to a sufficient number of guaranteed cash orders being received beforehand.* (If not enough orders are received, cash will of course be returned.)

We want to hear from you *at once* if you are interested. The price will be the same as before—6s. 6d. postpaid—for a book, remember, which is otherwise only obtainable (new) at 18s. Send in your name, address, and cash as soon as possible. If the requisite number of orders is in our hands quickly, the book can be in *your* hands in three or four weeks' time. But the edition will not be proceeded with until that requisite number is obtained; so that the more of your friends you can persuade to take advantage of our offer, the quicker you'll get your copy.

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NOW READY

The First Report & Directory
of the N.C.L.C.

EVERY secretary, tutor, and worker in our movement will want a copy of *The National Council of Labour Colleges: History, Report, and Directory* (24 pp. plus coloured cover 3d.), just off the press. Every District will require a quantity for propagandist purposes.

The publication of this *Report* is a landmark in the history of our movement, and to J. P. M. Millar, who has compiled it, all our thanks are due. The contents include a brief historical sketch of the Labour College movement; separate sections, with full lists of officers, etc., on the N.C.L.C., the Labour College (London), the Scottish Labour College, and the Plebs League; a full directory of N.C.L.C. Districts, Colleges and Classes, with lists of lecturers, etc.; and a list of Trades Unions, Trades Councils, etc., which support our movement. The whole thing is a handy summary of our aims and activities—just what has been badly needed for some time.

PLEASE NOTE :—

Order *quantities* (of one dozen or over) from J. P. M. Millar, Nat. Sec. N.C.L.C., 22, Elm Row, Edinburgh. Price 2s. 4d. per dozen (postpaid).

Order *single copies* from The PLEBS, 162a, Buckingham Palace Road, London, S.W. 1. Price 3½d. (postpaid).

OIL on TROUBLED SEAS

WHEN everything is propaganda it is certainly hard to get at the facts. But when one has had the propaganda of all sides, their several errors tend to cancel out, and one can as a result often get a truer picture than when the real facts are hidden beneath soothing lullabies of pseudo-impartiality. For three years our chief authority on the Imperialism of oil has been the booklet by Monsieur Delaisi.* Rumour has whispered

* *Oil*, by F. Delaisi, Trans. by C. L. Leese (Labour Pub. Co.).

that it is one-sided—that it is propaganda for Standard Oil. Now, however, our knowledge is supplemented by two further, and more comprehensive, books. The one, written with the persuasive charm and disarming moderation of the English liberal, has a strong savour of Shell propaganda about it.* The other, written with journalistic vigour and exaggeration by a zealous and realistic Frenchman, is clearly a brief for independent French oil production.† Together with Delaisi they form a comprehensive oil triangle—American-British-French—enabling us by a synthesis to get a picture of the whole.

The English book is “anti-Delaisi.” The writers refer to him as a “romanticist,” “malice winged with imagination,” whose “coloured version” causes one “to suspect the hand of Standard Oil.” The writers deny that there has been any organised plan on the part of British oil interests to dominate the oil resources of the world. On the contrary, they complain that the continual intervention of the British Government in the business through the Government-owned Anglo-Persian Oil Company has seriously hampered the development of Royal Dutch-Shell (the independent British oil combine); and by mixing oil prospecting too openly with politics and diplomacy has seriously aroused the fears of the American Government. The U.S.A. Government, taking up the cudgels on behalf of Standard Oil, have brought diplomatic pressure to bear, have accordingly forced the Anglo-Persian to make important concessions to them, *e.g.*, in Mesopotamia, and have introduced reprisals which have hit severely Royal Dutch-Shell.‡ The writers, therefore, condemn direct participation of the British Government in the oil business; it is a hindrance not a help. Moreover, they say, there is no point in it; not legal title to ownership but sea-power—the power to seize oil and to safeguard its transport by sea—is what will secure to a nation its oil-supplies in time of war. (Rather significantly, however, they neglect the fact that in peace-time the Government may have to pay for oil whatever price the oil monopolists choose.) Messrs. Davenport and Cooke accordingly recommend as a solution of the immediate problem that the Government should abandon direct participation in oil production, and should declare the principle of the Open Door—free right of American prospecting for oil in British territory, free right for British companies to take up

* *The Oil Trusts and Anglo-American Relations*, by E. H. Davenport and Sidney Russell Cooke (Macmillan, 7s. 6d. net.).

† *The World Struggle for Oil*, by P. L'Eshagnol de la Tramerye, Trans. by C. L. Leese (Allen and Unwin, 8s. 6d. net.).

‡ For instance, leases to subsidiaries of the British combine have been forbidden in U.S.A. The State of Oklahoma is taking steps to prevent foreign companies operating oil-lands in Oklahoma.

oil-leases in American territory. It is significant that the book appears just at the time when the sale of the Government's shares in Anglo-Persian Oil is in question ! It is significant too that the villain in this piece throughout is Standard Oil, together with the Washington Government officials who "think, talk, and write like Standard Oil officials !"

The French book, starting from the slogan on its cover that "just as the British Empire was built up on coalfields, so the Empires of the future will be founded upon the possession of oil," takes rather a different line. It traces the struggle between the British combine, Royal Dutch-Shell and the American Standard Oil for oil dominance in the world ; ending with the mournful plaint that "France, having neglected to obtain her share in the division of the world's oil, is to-day in a position of dependence upon Britain and America." And to drive home this chilling impression on French readers, so that they may be spurred to action themselves, is clearly the guiding *motif* of the book. Up to 1910 Standard Oil had the virtual monopoly of oil the world over ; it could dictate the world price. In 1907, however, the Shell Company of London, directed by Sir Marcus Samuel, amalgamated with the Royal Dutch Oil Company of the Hague, in which the dominating spirit was Henry Deterding (now Sir). After 1910 this new combine began to oust Standard Oil, its first success being in the Chinese market. It then proceeded to create subsidiary companies, in America* and to prospect for oil under the very nose of Standard Oil. "One-third of its (Royal Dutch-Shell) total production comes to-day from the United States."

On the outbreak of war there was a third big oil combine, trying to share in the monopoly of that ever-scarce commodity, oil. This was the German *Europäische Petroleum Union*, which had interests round the Black Sea, in Galicia, Roumania and in Mesopotamia. After the war Royal Dutch-Shell was anxious to secure these properties for itself, just as in 1919 it bought from Lord Cowdray the controlling interest in the Mexican Eagle, thereby encroaching further on the Standard Oil's monopoly. Here the Government-owned Anglo-Persian stepped in, and made the notorious San Remo treaty of 1919, by which Britain agreed to share with France the exploitation of these former German properties.

An interesting divergence of opinion here arises. M. Tramerye complains that in this San Remo agreement the French were in effect forced into dependence on Great Britain ; France was excluded from any more than a minor participation in these resources, except in the

* *Roxana Petroleum Coy.*, in Oklahoma, and the *Shell Company of California*. They cleverly got part of the shares in these companies subscribed by Americans, thereby making certain Americans unwilling to hamper British oil companies.

case of Roumania. In the view of the English writers the concessions made to France were unduly generous. The British had had a share with Germany in the Turkish Petroleum Company (operating in Mesopotamia) before the war, while France had had none. But yet at San Remo "France was assured of a quarter of the oil supplies of Mesopotamia, to which she had no previous claim!" Maybe, if negotiations had been left in private hands, Royal Dutch-Shell, uninfluenced by sentimental and diplomatic motives, might have struck a harder bargain? The Combines do not always like the helping hand of their states to be too evident.

At any rate there is no doubt about the effect of the San Remo Treaty. Americans immediately began to fear a British oil-monopoly with the world price of oil dictated by the British trust. Formerly the American public had been distrustful of Standard Oil as an extortionate monopoly. But with the growing imperialist spirit Standard Oil became an integral part of "100-per-cent.-Americanism." Distrust turned to sympathy and then to ardent loyalty—especially in view of the fact that there were 60,000 small shareholders on the lists of the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey. The Government became the voice of Standard Oil, more especially after the rise of President Harding's "big business administration." The office of the Secretary of State became like "any other branch of Standard Oil."* American diplomatists abroad became mere agents of the big Trust. Protests were sent from Washington to the Dutch Government against the exclusion of American capital in the Dutch East Indies. Complaints were made to Lord Curzon against the "closed door" in the oil areas of the British Empire. To annoy Great Britain it was moved at Geneva to reconsider the League of Nations colonial mandates.

Then came the Genoa Conference—Lloyd George's great conference to stabilise Europe. Here behind the scenes the agents of Royal Dutch-Shell met the representatives of Soviet Russia to arrange a lease of the oil fields in South Russia. A newspaper report declared that an agreement had actually been arrived at. Whereupon "American apathy in the proceedings was suddenly changed into anxious interest . . . Standard Oil set its unofficial machinery in motion."† It influenced the French and Belgians to oppose the British proposals. The French had had a few oil rights in Russia in pre-war days. They, therefore, declared for restitution of all nationalised property in Russia to former owners. "America once more officially declared for the 'open-door' policy, while unofficially Standard Oil backed the French and Belgian stand on the terms of the Allied note to Russia."‡ So

* Davenport and Cooke, 9. 88.

† Davenport and Cooke, pp. 131-2.

‡ Davenport and Cooke, p. 132.

the liberal dreams of Genoa were shattered by the rude realities of Imperialism ! Sir Henry Deterding consoled himself by making an agreement with M. Krassin for the marketing of 200,000 tons of Russian petroleum, an agreement greatly resented by the French and Belgian interests.

To appease America the British Government proceeded to make important concessions to Standard Oil in the matter of Mosul oil. It will be remembered that Mosul oil was the chief issue at the Lausanne Conference. Fifty per cent. of the Anglo-Persian's half-interest in the Turkish Petroleum Company was given to Standard Oil, much to the displeasure, apparently, of Royal Dutch-Shell. Similar concessions were offered in Northern Persia. But the U.S.A. Government on its side was applying "pressure" in the shape of reprisals on British interests in American territory. It was also directly or indirectly encouraging a revolution in Mexico, where British oil interests were particularly favoured. It was for these reasons that Royal Dutch-Shell, drawing one-third of its oil supplies from American soil, began to be anxious that the principle of the "open door" should be generally adopted. Maybe, also, it is to indemnify itself against any loss it may suffer from this that it is anxious at the same time to take over the resources of Anglo-Persian Oil.

Whether France gained or lost at San Remo, Genoa, and the Hague it is difficult to say. At any rate she is determined to be dependent no longer for oil supplies on a British Trust or an American. French finance is consolidating her investments in Roumania. She has secured special privileges for French oil companies in Poland. A State oil bureau is being set up to encourage prospecting for oil in French territory. She is even flirting with Soviet Russia—maybe with one eye on the oil of Baku ! So the struggle of the big Imperialist groups goes on.

Now, one of the first questions before the Labour Government will be whether it is to sell or to retain its holdings in Anglo-Persian

AN First Edition (5000 copies) nearly sold out
OUTLINE OF
ECONOMIC With 44 maps
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Oil. No doubt it will decide to retain them, and the decision will be hailed as a victory for Socialism. But this will not necessarily be so. As past history shows, that all depends on the *aim* of the State control. If the State under a Labour Government still maintains its imperialist aims and is still dominated by its imperialist personnel, the policy of government-controlled oil will be as much an imperialist one and have as disastrous results as before. Only if a Workers' Government cuts itself adrift from Imperialist aims, breaks the dominance of the bourgeois personnel which administers State policy, and uses its control of resources, not to strengthen British capitalism, but as a weapon to weaken capitalism both at home and abroad, will this danger be avoided. Mere liberal phrases about an "open door" merely play into the hands of one Combine or other. Meanwhile, perhaps, we can say with Messrs. Davenport and Cooke that there is no need in our interpretation of international politics to "preach the 'hidden hand' of the oil interest; (for) one finds more often than not that the hand is openly disclosed without even its customary glove!"

MAURICE DOBB.

PLEBS SUMMER SCHOOLS

BOOKINGS have been coming in thick and fast for both Schools, and especially for Cober Hill, about which—as it takes place two months before the Blackpool event—it is desirable to make your mind up quickly. Friends who have booked recently include our comrade Jagger (of N.U.D.A.W.), Ellen Wilkinson of the same Union, and Dr. James Johnston, whose Biology

lectures for the Liverpool Labour College have been so successful.

Blackpool in August—with "the sea at the end of the garden," too—is going to be a historic week. Don't delay about sending in your name, as the sooner the list is filled, the quicker we can get on to arranging the programme.

We give below again full particulars of the two Schools.

JUNE 7TH TO JUNE 14TH.

COBER HILL, CLOUGHTON, SCARBOROUGH

Full programme of lectures will be issued later.

Tennis, Bowling, Cricket. The sea within a few minutes' walk. Wonderful gardens and the moors within easy distance.

An ideal place for a holiday.

Dramatic performances, dances and excursions.

Terms, £3 3s.

AUGUST 9TH TO AUGUST 16TH.

BISPHAM HOLIDAY HOME, BLACKPOOL

Programme will be issued later.

Tennis, Bowling, Cricket. The sea at the end of the garden.

Places have been reserved in the House.

Terms, 56s. per week. Places in Tents in the grounds, 45s. 6d.

Entertainments, etc., will be arranged for those who do not wish to attend lectures.

THE PLEBS

A WORKER looks at IRISH HISTORY

This outline concludes the series which has been appearing in The PLEBS since last October.

VI.—LABOUR AND IRELAND'S FUTURE

WHAT part will Labour play in the future of Ireland? The agricultural strike in Waterford last June, when the farmers attempted to smash the Union and enforce a wage cut of 5s. a week, and the one which—as a protest against a wage cut of 2s. a day—affected 8,000 dockers and paralysed the Free State ports from the middle of July up to November—these show that the Irish workers, who have not been submitted to the discipline of mines and factories for a century, will not suffer wage reductions without a struggle.

The previous history of Labour organisation in Ireland can soon be summarised. The Whiteboys, the Ribbonmen, and other associations of peasants and labourers have already been mentioned. There were in Dublin craft unions whose general behaviour and alleged persecution of the “colts” (non-unionists) were used by O’Connell to maintain the legal ban placed upon the trade unions in 1799 by the British Parliament. Ireland too, had its Luddite episodes. But Fergus O’Connor, Bronterre O’Brien and John Doherty, seeing Ireland under the sway of O’Connell, found spheres of activity the other side of the Irish sea. Ireland had a practical demonstration of Owenite ideals in the Ralahine Community (1831-33) which received support from William Thompson of Cork. This community—when elsewhere hunted peasants took recourse in outrage against their persecutors—flourished for two years until the land was taken from the tenants, who were evicted because their agreement with the bankrupt landowner was not recognised as a legal document.

But the two men who gave Labour organisation in Ireland such prominence as to lift it above the previously predominating agitations for Home Rule, were James Connolly and Jim Larkin.

Connolly was organiser, pamphleteer, historian and speaker rolled into one. In Scotland and America he was known as an able advocate of Industrial Unionism. He told his fellow Irishmen in 1897 :

If you remove the English army to-morrow and hoist the green flag above Dublin castle, unless you set about the organisation of the Socialist Republic your efforts would be in vain. England would still rule you through her

capitalists, through her landlords, through her usurers, through the whole array of commercialist and individualist institutions she has planted in this country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs . . .*

But his later books reveal a stronger nationalist sentiment. And he, believing in his own words: "That the true revolutionist should ever call into action on his side the entire sum of all the forces and factors of political and social discontent," took an active part in the Gaelic League, and worked for the blending of his socialist ideal with the ideal of a united and free Ireland. He enlarged afterwards upon the chance of utilising the traditional clan spirit of the Irish on the higher plane of a Socialist Republic; nationalist agitation was to be part of the means to a Socialist end. The self-help movement which Plunkett and others advocated influenced Connolly, and in his later writings he urged the numerous small farmers and peasants of the country to act in alliance with the industrial workers.

But it was Larkin who took the casual labourers and transport workers of Dublin and Belfast by the scruff of the neck, and by his wonderful appeals made men and trade unionists out of these poor creatures of the underworld. Kicked from pillar to post, victimised repeatedly, half starved and put in irons in a rat-infested shiphold but still unbroken—Larkin was the man for the job. The Orangemen and Catholics forgot their ancient differences inside the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union which he and Connolly founded in 1909. Even the Catholic priests could not lessen his temporary triumph over religious bigotry, and his imprisonment later made him a greater hero than ever.

In 1913 the employers were thoroughly alarmed by the lightning sympathetic strikes and the increasing militancy of the I.T. and G.W.U. and, headed by W. Murphy, they determined to smash the Union once and for all. A long and bitter struggle, lasting eight months, ended in a drawn battle and a very weakened Union. Soon after, Larkin went away to the United States for eight years, two of which were spent in prison.

Connolly and others kept the Union going and also organised bodies of riflemen. After his leadership in the 1916 Insurrection, Connolly, too badly wounded to stand, was propped up to be shot.

* The fulfilment of Connolly's prophecy is to be found in the *M.G. Commercial* (4-10-23), where Cosgrave stated that a large part of Irish capital finds its way into England *via* the banks, and he acknowledges that Ireland is dependent upon "the skilled financiers of London" who "are the machine through which the money must pass . . ." He continued: "Already our economic life is more or less under a stranglehold from England . . ." Some of the British industries are anticipating fiscal hindrances and so, to again quote Cosgrave, "already the tobacco combine is erecting factories in Dublin and Messrs. Vickers have floated Vickers (Ireland) Ltd., to take over the Dublin shipbuilding company."

He gave his life for his belief in the Irish Socialist Republic. His influence is to be seen in the sympathy manifested by the Sinn Fein Government (1918-21) towards the workers. Thomas Foran and William O'Brien, and others, rebuilt the I.T. and G.W.U. after the débâcle of 1916.

Larkin returned in April of the present year and it is difficult to understand his break with the present leaders of the I.T. and G.W.U. The *Voice of Labour* accuses him of breaking down solidarity—especially necessary just now—for the sake of winning undivided personal rule. In May, the journal was rejoicing in the return of the Union's General Secretary and publishing his messages to the Old Guard. A few weeks later its leading article was headed "There is Laughter in Hell," and vigorous onslaughts were made upon Larkin's past and present conduct. Larkin was expelled by the E.C. from his post of General Secretary of the I.T. and G.W.U. He replied by seizing the Union headquarters, and made various charges against the Union leaders. Legal proceedings in which he challenged the validity of the rules have just failed; and he had refused to abide by the decision of an investigating committee appointed by a delegate conference of the Union. He is undoubtedly the greatest individual force in the Irish movement, but with or without him the Irish Labour movement politically and industrially, will go forward. Its progress, however, would be accelerated by an end of these unhappy divisions.

The Present Labour Movement

Since Ireland has little industry outside the linen and shipbuilding of Belfast, the "big battalions" of British Trade Unionism (miners, weavers and engineers) are absent. Peasant landholders outnumber the wage workers by six to one, and so far few agricultural workers are organised. Porters, dockers and railwaymen, chiefly engaged in trans-shipment of agricultural produce, form the chief sections of the movement. The Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress has a total strength of only 350,000, out of which 100,000 are inside the I.T. and G.W.U. This Union is the nearest attempt at the One Big Union that has yet been made. Unfortunately, as in Great Britain, there are rivalries and over-lappings, e.g., its rail and seamen's sections are at variance with the N.U.R. and the N.S. and F.U. Irish sentiment against the English national Unions has been a factor in the spread of this attempt at an O.B.U. It has industrial sections, branches and district councils as well as general branches and councils and runs the weekly *Voice of Labour*.

The political expression of the movement, the Irish Labour Party, has only been seen since the truce with the Nationalists was broken after the creation of a Free State Parliament. The

Labour members in the Dail are advocating the same policy of nationalisation of the mineral resources and the transport facilities, of removal of food taxes, and of work or maintenance for the unemployed that their colleagues advocate in Great Britain. T. Johnson's speeches, however, reveal in contrast a desire for Protection for infant industries against the well-established industries of Britain and other advanced countries. Because of the rushed Election and the unprepared political organisation, in addition to the overshadowing sympathy with the arrested Republicans, the Labour members were reduced by two, only fifteen out of forty-five candidates being successful in August.

The Free State Government will not be strong enough to disregard this growing force. The restoration of "law and order" (flogging is being tried at the present moment), compensation for damaged property, coping with past and present "land grabbing," the demobilisation of its well paid army in a land with 50,000 unemployed, and the claims of various industries for protective tariffs and subsidies—these are some of the immediate problems of the Free State. By its military assistance to break strikes and to secure evictions and the seizure of the property of rent defaulters, and its general policy of lavish salaries for Ministers and reduced Old Age Pensions and lower wages for State and other employees, the Free State Government seems bent on becoming what Connolly prophesied it would—the tool of British-Irish capitalism.

The more Ireland is industrialised the more distinct will become the social needs of the workers. For centuries the best blood of Ireland has been forced to emigrate. Now it is deciding to stay at home, and land hunger is intensified. There are 15,000,000 acres available for tillage and grazing in Ireland, and these are now divided into 500,000 holdings, but 200,000 of these holdings are of one to five acres of the poorest land. Therefore, the distribution of the land will be well to the fore in any Labour programme, and endeavours are being made to link up the small farmer with the industrial workers in opposition to the large graziers, ranchers and capitalists. If Irish Labour can accomplish this without falling into the ditch of peasant proprietorship, it will have gone far towards solving one of its most urgent problems.

MARK STARR.

BOOKS FOR FURTHER READING

GENERAL

James Connolly : *Labour in Irish History*, and *The Reconquest of Ireland*. These are of first importance despite minor errors discovered by critics. (Obtainable at 9d. each post free or 7s. per dozen. Literature Dept., I.T. and G.W.U., 35, Parnell Square, Dublin.)

William McLaine : *The Economics of the Irish Question* (2d.) slight, but has useful data.

D. A. Chart : *An Economic History of Ireland*. (Talbot Press, 5s.).

R. Dunlop : *Ireland : From Earliest Times to Present Day*. Short general summaries, the latter political.

Mrs. Green : *The Making of Ireland and Its Undoing*.

Stephen Gwynn : *History of Ireland*. A recent political survey.

FOR PARTICULAR MODERN MOVEMENTS

W. P. Ryan : *The Irish Labour Movement*. (T. Fisher Unwin, 6s.) The only special treatment of the Irish craft unions.

Smith-Gordon and C. O'Brien : *Co-operation in Ireland*. (Co-op. Union, 3s. 6d.).

Horace Plunkett : *Ireland in The New Century*.

A. de Blacam : *What Sinn Fein Stands For*. (Chapman & Dodd, 1921). This book reveals how some of the younger men had been considerably influenced by Guild Socialism of the Catholic variety, which looks longingly back to the Middle Ages and regards capitalism as a curse, "an ugly abnormality" which Ireland could and would avoid.

CURRENT LITERATURE

Voice of Labour. (I.T. and G.W.U.)

The Irish Worker. (Larkin).

The Workers' Republic. (Communist).

The ECONOMICS of CAPITALISM

A Syllabus for Classes

THIS syllabus is an attempt to sketch a course of study suitable for elementary students, to meet the growing need to relate our teaching of theory to the facts of the class struggle to-day. An attempt is made to break down the old academic barriers between Economics and History, and to avoid abstract and difficult discussions of the Theories of Value, Price, Rent, etc. (so baffling to beginners).

Instead, it attempts to show capitalism as a developing whole ; thereby emphasising first the *facts* of exploitation and the class struggle, and bringing in theoretical analysis only where it is needed to throw light on particular facts. To emphasise the importance of practical application of our studies, the last three lessons are made to deal with post-war developments, with the workers' movement as a whole, and with working-class politics.

The syllabus, which has been subjected to modification and criticism by numerous comrades, is intended to suggest a *general method of treatment*, rather than to provide a basis for hair-splitting controversies. In several places it has been framed in Questions, so that class leaders may use it, either as a basis for a Question-and-Answer method, or to intersperse questions to the class in their lectures.—M. H. D.

The first three lessons are published this month. Lessons 4, 5, 6, and 7 will appear in our April issue, and the two concluding ones in May.

LESSONS

1. Capitalist Production—its beginnings.
2. Capitalist Production during the last century.
3. Capitalist Production since 1870.
4. Money and Credit under Capitalism.
5. The Concentration of Capital.
6. Capitalism in Decline (a).
7. Capitalism in Decline (b).
8. The Workers' Movement.
9. Economics and Politics—The Workers and the Revolution.

LESSON 1.—CAPITALIST PRODUCTION—ITS BEGINNINGS

What is Capitalism ?

A system under which a small class (the capitalists) have the monopoly of land and capital (means of production). This class is therefore able to make the workers (who have nothing to live on) work to produce wealth for them. The capitalist class, therefore, because of its monopoly, can *exploit* the workers.

How do the Capitalists keep their monopoly ?

By monopoly of *political power* (a) control over the State. This enables them to control military force, the administration of law, etc. (b) By monopoly of methods of forming opinion—press, education, etc.

How did Capitalism develop ?(a) *First Stage of Capitalism* (1500-1800).

Originally when modern towns grew up, the artisan worked with his own tools in his own shop, like a blacksmith or boot repairer to-day. They combined in Craft Guilds. There were also rich merchants organised in Merchant Guilds, who monopolised foreign trade (e.g., Merchant Adventurers, Hansa, etc.). Gradually the richer craftsmen spent all their time in *trading*, and hired others to work in their shop. These richer craftsmen gradually obtained for themselves a *monopoly of trading*—no one else was allowed to buy and sell. They got special charters and privileges from the town government and the Crown. They also obtained political power in the towns and used it to suppress poorer craftsmen and journey-men (day wage-labourers) and to prevent them rising and becoming masters and merchants.

Thus three classes were created :—(1) Rich merchants (e.g., merchants of Levant Company, East India Company, Drapers,

Merchant Tailors, etc.). (2) Small master craftsmen, working on their own and selling to merchants, but often employed by merchants. They worked, however, in their own shops. (3) Journeymen employed by master craftsmen.

In the seventeenth century some of the richer members of (2) secured monopoly privileges for themselves (*e.g.*, Stuart monopolies) giving sole right to produce certain things. There therefore grew a further division into:—

(2*a*) Rich master industrialists.

(2*b*) Poor master craftsmen employed by them.

The former obtained a share of political power and got laws passed to limit wages of journeymen.

N.B.—Some rich merchants and rich masters bought land and became landowners (the Whig aristocracy). Many former landowning nobles invested their money in trade. Therefore the propertied class tended to be welded into one.

During this period therefore, the rich merchants were growing wealthy out of the colonial trade, which they monopolised. The landowners were growing wealthy by amassing rents and royalties (*e.g.*, on coal) and by the increasing selling-price of their land. Hence *capital was accumulating*, which could be employed by the capitalists in setting up factories and machinery.

At the same time a class without any means of getting a living (*i.e.*, without any land or capital) was being formed, partly because the landowners "enclosed" land for their own use and turned peasants off it.

LESSON 2.—CAPITALIST PRODUCTION DURING THE LAST CENTURY.

(Summarise First Lesson at start.)

(*b*) *Second Stage of Capitalism* (1800-1870).

Features:—(*a*) Machinery-production in *Factories*. (*b*) Increased class division and stronger monopoly to capitalist class. (*c*) Increased exploitation of workers. (*d*) Increasing division of labour, widening of market, and growth of scale of production. (*e*) Rise of new industrial capitalist class.

What caused the change about 1800?

Inventions of machinery worked by *power*. This needed production in *factories*. It meant that only those with some capital could set up factories and machinery. Therefore it:—(*a*) Knocked out old hand-craftsmen. (*b*) Made it more difficult for workers to rise.

The result of this (known as the *Industrial Revolution*) was that the class 2*a* (see Lesson 1) became new factory-capitalists, and 2*b* fell into ranks of 3. 1 and 2*a* had differences among themselves (Tories *v.* Free Trade Liberals), but they eventually joined into one class.

Thus came the new class divisions into :—(1) Capitalists. (2) Workers.

The new industrial capitalists struggled to obtain political power and to secure Free Trade and *Laissez-faire*. Result :—Reform Act, 1832, in Britain, Liberal Revolutions of 1830 and 1848 in Europe.

Cobden and Bright political pioneers of new industrial capitalist class. Gladstone its great Prime Minister.

(Describe degradation of workers in factories and towns during Industrial Revolution.)

LESSON 3.—CAPITALIST PRODUCTION SINCE 1870.

(c) *Final (Imperialist) Stage of Capitalism 1870-1914.*

Features :—(a) Rise of giant factory-production, principally in iron and steel. (b) Division of labour and the market become world-wide ; economic interdependence of the world. (c) Concentration of capital and control leading to combines and monopolies (instead of free competition). (d) Linking of banking and industrial capital ; growth of financial oligarchy. (e) Export of capital and iron and steel goods. (f) International combines scramble to partition the world between them. (g) Centralisation of State power and increased control over State by big combines—abandonment of *laissez-faire*. (h) States help the combines in their scramble—Imperialism. The rush for colonies in Africa, Persia, China, etc.

New inventions in iron and steel between 1850 and 1870 made possible *mass production*. To finance this large masses of capital were necessary. Hence Joint Stock Companies and linking of Finance and Industry (Finance-capital). Growth of big combines and financial syndicates controlling industry. Examples : Stinnes, Comité des Forges and Banque de L'Union Parisienne, Vickers, Standard Oil.

These combines need control of *raw materials*. Also since iron and steel trades are always most hit during trade depression, they needed *markets* abroad. Markets for iron and steel only given by *investments*, e.g., in factories and railways. To safeguard investments *political control* of spheres of investment needed. Hence :—(a) Export of Capital. (b) Export of iron and steel goods. (c) Export of British diplomats, government officials, soldiers and warships—“political control.”

All the big capitalist nations did the same. Hence economic and political rivalry. Example : Cape to Cairo Railway (British) ; Bagdad Railway (German). Result, WAR.

N.B.—Capitalism develops (1) Social mass production (scientifically organised) ; but (2) there is *Anarchy of Production* (i.e., unregulated) ; and (3) there is *Class Monopoly*.

THE PLEBS

NOTES BY THE WAY

for Students and Tutors

A Sidelight on English History

AN interesting piece of realistic interpretation of history comes from an unexpected source—I. D. Colvin, *The Germans in England* (published by *The National Review*). The book is frankly partisan, being written at the beginning of the war to try to show that the Germans have always been enemies of England. But it pierces through surface forms to root facts in a most refreshing manner.

It deals with the period up to Elizabeth's reign. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries England was practically a "colony" of the German Hansa merchants. They lent money to the Crown and so got special trade privileges, providing them with a virtual monopoly. They had privileges of trade which even natives did not enjoy. In London and other towns, in courts dealing with commercial cases, they had the right to appoint two of the judges. They bribed the Mayor of London with a yearly gift of money, concealed in a glove, and also bribed many of his corporation. According to Mr. Colvin, Simon de Montfort was a champion of English capital invested in wool-working (hitherto the Hansa merchants had exported raw wool to be worked abroad), and he rallied national hatred of foreign exploitation against the Crown.

During the Wars of the Roses, the Lancastrians were financially dependent on the Hansa merchants, and the Yorkists represented the anti-foreign sentiment—the desire for Protection, *i.e.*, monopoly for English merchants, and the ending of the monopolistic privileges granted to the Hansa. By the time of the Tudors the new nationalist feeling was gathering force. The ministers of the Crown—Thos. Cromwell, Wolsey, Gresham, Burleigh—were all anti-foreign and pro-national capital; and so by the reign of Elizabeth the privileges of the Hansa merchants were completely removed, and the privileges of mono-

poly were given to British merchants instead. That is why, no doubt, it has been called the Glorious Reign of Good Queen Bess!

The growth of the nationalist movement coincided with the growing wealth and influence of the Company of Merchant Adventurers—a company of rich merchant monopolists. Cromwell, Wolsey, Gresham and Burleigh, were all closely associated with this powerful company.

Adult Education by Newspaper

A New York evening paper has recently been trying a new development in adult education by "featuring" short courses—one lesson per day—on Economics, Social Problems, etc., specially prepared by members of Columbia University. It will be interesting to see if this lead is followed by any of our own newspapers; and, if so, to note who supplies the goods. Rival "interpretations" of, say, the history of France by the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily News* would provide much entertaining material.

Lack of Logic in Eccleston Square

The same issue of the *Labour Press Service* which reported (see p. 73, January PLEBS) that the Carnegie Trust was prepared to assist financially in the provision of textbooks for W.E.A. students—and which apparently found nothing alarming or unusual in this—waxed indignant (quite rightly) about Mr. W. M. R. Pringle's allegations of "Tory gold for Labour candidates." Yet if "working-class" organisations are prepared to accept assistance from the executors of Steel Kings in the sphere of education, why shouldn't they take help from the bosses in politics? If the workers' movement stands for *independence* it will be equally opposed to subsidies in any department of its activities.

A Mecca for Marxians

A recent number of the *Liberator* contained an interesting account of the

Marx and Engels Institute at Moscow, in which are collected not only original (and autographed) editions of the works of both writers, but also complete sets of the books of all writers quoted, or referred to, by either. So far-reaching were the studies of the two masters that a vast library is the result, and this is further supplemented by collections of letters, pictures, manuscripts, etc., illustrating every event of their lives and the principal happenings in contemporary history.

The Institute is by no means merely a mausoleum, however, for it includes an enormous section devoted to the whole literature of Marxism—Russian and other—down to the present day.

YOU WILL BE INTERESTED TO KNOW:—

That Postgate's *Builders' History* is appearing in *Grundstein*, the organ of

the Youth Section of the German Building Workers' Union.

That our series, "A Worker Looks at Irish History," is being reprinted in the *Voice of Labour* (Dublin).

That Ness Edwards has compiled a *Guide* for workmen's inspectors in mines, which is a handy summary of their duties, responsibilities and legal powers (1½d. postpaid, from 33, Grosvenor Road, Abertillery).

That the new reprint of the *Outline of Psychology* brings the total copies printed up to 8,000.

That the *Daily Sketch* (24-10-23) found additional proof that Esperanto was being used for secret Communist propaganda in the "fact" that Zamenhof, its inventor, was the uncle—or great-uncle—of Trotsky!

Financing "Impartiality"

We have received the following letter from the Yorkshire District Secretary of the W.E.A. Our own comments follow his letter.

DEAR COMRADE,—Under the above heading you publish in your February issue a misleading statement to the effect that the Carnegie Trust have decided to finance the publication of W.E.A. textbooks.

As a matter of fact the Carnegie Trust have merely offered to provide any books we might suggest which are beyond the means of our own students to obtain. *A Worker Looks at History*, by Mark Starr is a great favourite with our students.

Two things strike me as remarkable about your article. First, that in these days of industrial unrest even a "rebel" can obtain such huge satisfaction from so insignificant a thing and finds such a dearth of valid criticism against the W.E.A. that he has to raise an "attack" supported by such rotten props, and second the paucity of your sense of humour.

You rend our hearts with an autobiography of Andrew Carnegie as "a monster gorging midst starving populations." Assuming your esti-

mate of Carnegie's character is correct, there is to my mind a gleam of humour in using the money he left to convert the conditions under which the wealth was gained. I think we might even find a precedent in the action of your Marxian Soviet Russian Government which used the wealth it "inherited" from the Czarist regime to propagate doctrines which would have petrified the late Czar and his associates.

You say "I can promise to be candid but not impartial." If the effort of reasoned judgment is beyond your powers, might I suggest that your efforts to be candid will lose no force if associated with the real facts.

Yours faithfully,
ERNEST GREEN.

[Our statement about the Carnegie Trust and W.E.A. Textbooks was based, as we mentioned last month, on a paragraph which appeared in the *Labour Press Service* for January 3rd. As this latter organ circulates pretty widely among Labour organisations we hope that Mr. Green is sending along a "correction" to it also.

But after all, just how "misleading" was our statement? The real point

is not whether the Carnegie Trust is going to finance the publication of new books or supply gratis copies of old ones. The point is—Would a genuinely working-class organisation accept financial help from the trustees of a man who "made" his millions as Andrew Carnegie did? Mr. Green nowhere denies that the W.E.A. is prepared to accept help from this source. He perceives "a gleam of humour" in using the money so made "to controvert the conditions under which the wealth was gained." But what we should like to know is—Does the W.E.A. frankly tell people like the Cassel trustees and the Carnegie trustees that it is going to use their money for anti-capitalist propaganda?

His "precedent" from Russia is no precedent at all. The Soviet Government *took over* what wealth there was in Russia, and did not go, cap in hand, to beg for it.

Another W.E.A.er writes to a Pleb

friend:—"Vastly amused at the line The PLEBS takes this month about accepting money from 'tainted' sources like the Carnegie Fund. *I trust that no Pleb will ever use a Free Library.*" Presumably the writer's conception of an educational organisation is something roughly parallel to a Free Library—something that hands out tosh, actual poison, soothing syrup and useful food in about equal proportions. The parallel may apply to the W.E.A.; and if the W.E.A. is content to regard itself, and advertise itself, as belonging to this category, we see no reason why it should decline cash from any source whatever.

But we still think that a real working-class educational organisation would, like the political and industrial organisations of the working class, decline to be an object of philanthropy; even if—which is unlikely, if it really were what it pretended to be—"philanthropists" ever gave it the opportunity.—ED., PLEBS.]

OUR READERS' VIEWS

PROLETARIAN ACADEMICISM

DEAR COMRADE,—It is strange that all except three of those who have joined in the discussion on my letter in the November issue have missed the whole point I was trying to make. The heading of the letter should, surely, have given some guide, even if those comrades did not read my letter carefully enough to gather it.

Com. Fitzpatrick makes it an issue of Dietzgen and anti-Dietzgen. Com. Holder, for some reason or other, writes as if my case were both anti-Dietzgen and anti-Marx. What I said was: Let us put whatever there is of good in Dietzgen and whatever there is of good in scientific philosophers who have written since Dietzgen (much has happened during the last fifty years, e.g., Einstein and revolutionary new discoveries in higher mathematics), in *plain straightforward common-or-garden English*; and let us put it in such a way that it cuts out as much abstract and academic stuff as possible, and enables the student to get a grip of the essentials of scientific method in about three lessons. After all it

is the scientific outlook or attitude of mind—the *habit* of thinking scientifically and not metaphysically—that we want to develop. Whether we can go through a series of exercises of intellectual jugglery to disprove every error that has ever been perpetrated matters little.

Dietzgen is *very* hard to read and grasp. He expressed himself in the methods of thought and phraseology then common in Germany—that of the Hegelian philosophers. If the average worker is given this to read as the necessary preliminary to knowledge, one of three things will happen:—(a) he will not understand it and will think it all "bosh"; (b) he will *think* he understands it, but will in fact have got it all wrong; (c) having grasped it after a stupendous intellectual effort, he will have so filled his mind with it as to be unable to open his mind to anything else. Q's statement that it is like "using a battleship to open an oyster" seems to me to fit excellently. It is for that reason that I welcome F. P.'s suggestion: "Let the essence of Dietzgen's views be re-stated in

simple language, and be called the method of science. Omit the history of philosophy, apply the theory to those ideas round which the class struggle is circling."

Com. Craik's letter merely illustrates my point. (He, be it noted, leaves the criticism of academicism alone.) It is full of *abstractions*—difficult ones, which to me mean nothing at all. Let us come down to earth and start with plain phrases, which mean something to the average worker. Until we all get a grasp of one or two simple matters nearer to earth, I think there is little chance of us "knowing that the nature of the absolute and the nature of its relative parts, including human knowledge, are one and the same" (Is that anything more than word-magic?) It is, surely, only those who are not devoting their whole attention to hard facts and to the class struggle, who want to know the "how" and the "why" of the absolute. I am content to take what I see and feel at their face value, and to start with them as "given." A table is for me a table. That I am told is what science does. Why, then, all this fuss about metaphysics?

Yours,
M. H. D.

GLASGOW & THE W.E.A.

DEAR COMRADE,—It never entered my head to suggest that Mr. Fyfe should spend a whole evening refuting the arguments of a W. E. A. propagandist." There were others in the meeting quite capable of putting the case against me. But I hope he has learnt from the result that it is not quite fair and it is certainly rash to rush into print with dogmatic statements about the character and effect of a meeting from an important part of which one has absented oneself.

Mr. Fyfe's reference to the Glasgow Trades and Labour Council is also unfortunate. Some time ago a very determined attack on the affiliation of the Council to the W. E. A. was begun by the Scottish Labour College. This affiliation was carried last year by forty-six votes to forty-three. At a recent meeting, after a vigorous discussion on both sides, it was decided to continue affiliation by seventy-four

votes to fifty-five. The local Secretary of the College, who took part, has since asserted that the W. E. A. vote was "beat up." The fact is that no one inside or outside the Council, except the Secretary but including the President, knew that the matter was on the agenda of the meeting until after it had actually started. No official member of the W. E. A. took any part in the discussion.

Yours fraternally,
HERBERT E. R. HIGHTON.

[The Nat. Sec., N. C. L. C. writes :—It is no doubt a great consolation to Mr. Highton that the Glasgow Trades Council, which affiliated to the local Committee of the Scottish Labour College *without opposition*, is still prepared *after a vote* to affiliate to the W. E. A. What Mr. Highton, who is Scottish Organising Secretary for the W. E. A., is careful *not* to explain is that he is President of the Trades Council !

Quite a number of the Scottish Trades Councils are refusing to have any connection with the W. E. A., a fact which was lamented at a recent W. E. A. Conference. Very recently the W. E. A. endeavoured to get Edinburgh Trades Council to reverse its decision not to affiliate to it, but met with an overwhelming defeat. Glasgow will no doubt follow the example of Edinburgh and other trades councils very shortly.]

DIPLOMATISTS

DEAR EDITOR,—As a result of the necessary "boiling down" I omitted a most important point from my review last month of Pribram's book, *Austrian Foreign Policy, 1908-18*.

In the opening chapter Professor Pribram says that "a full and detailed account of pre-war diplomacy will only be possible when all Governmental Archives are open to inspection following the example of Germany and Austria." He deliberately omits all reference to the shattering disclosures from the Russian Imperial Archives already published and still being published by the Russian Soviet Government—the first of which appeared more than six years ago!! Can you wonder that I declared the book was obviously written in such a manner as not to offend the Entente

Allies and their friends of the Little Entente?

Yours faithfully,
A. P. L.

Roots

DEAR EDITOR,—It is almost a pity to have to answer the "argument" put up now by Mr. Adkins. I might, as he says, have taken either *educere* or *educare*, which both come from the same root; but he takes *edo* which has no root connexion with these whatever. And now in order to establish his seriousness as he calls it, he says that originally he was using *edo* frivolously.

It is an old game to laugh when one has no other defence and blame the other man for being too serious, but

no matter what a "jolly good fellow" one may be it is scarcely possible to giggle oneself into being correct. His joke about searching for errors is merely puerile. Further, if the Magazine doesn't want straight reviews it should keep a standardised stock in hand.

Yours,
A. M. R.

[We think this correspondence had better close here. We are altogether puzzled by A. M. R.'s last sentence. Is he suggesting that because we give an author the opportunity of replying to a PLEB review, we are trying to discourage "straight" reviewing? If so he is jumping to conclusions somewhat hastily.—Ed.]

BOOKS REVIEWED by PLEBS reviewers

SEA (DIRTY) DOGS

Studies in Labour and Capital. No. 6.
Shipping (Labour & Research Dept., is.).

HOW to obtain a greater profit and yet reduce the rate of dividend? This, along with a whole mass of economic facts is presented in this latest volume of the *Studies in Labour and Capital*, dealing with the Shipping industry.

This industry, so vital to Britain, is shown to be, under capitalistic control, mainly an institution for pumping profits out of social labour into the pockets of the holders of shipping capital. The buccaneers who scoured the seas in the days of Elizabeth were honest men compared with modern ship-owning capitalists. Old ships valued at the price of scrap before the war were bought up, insured far above their book value, and then sent to sea, under the saving grace of the Government War Risks Insurance Scheme. And when these coffin ships went to the bottom by gale or torpedo then the owners realised a fortune.

For information as to the nature and magnitude of watered capital and the various devices for raising profits by reducing the rate of dividend,

see the chapters on Profits and Bonus Shares and Typical Companies.

The whole aim of those who control shipping appears to be directed to how most effectually they can conceal from the public the extent to which they rob the community and the seaman, by secret reserves out of income, insurance, depreciation, and subsidiary companies.

On p. 23 we are given a table of some large shipping concerns which shows that 60 per cent. of the ordinary capital in 1922 was watered, *i.e.*, *fictional*, capital. One concern is mentioned in which, out of every five shares held, only one was paid for. The others were bonus shares, the unpaid labour of the ship workers. A dividend of 10 per cent. paid on these inflated shares really means a dividend of 50 per cent.

An excellent short chapter is devoted to the seamen's organisations. It will be news to many that even after the passing of the Merchant Shipping Act of 1906 British standards for sea-farers were stated, at the Congress of the Royal Sanitary Institute in 1914, to be the lowest of any country in the world. Thousands of British seamen are condemned to tuberculosis through having their cabins cramped and over-crowded to make

more cargo-space. A short sketch of Plimsoll and his work is also given, and also Lloyd George, who "by a stroke of the pen undid the work of Plimsoll" in 1906 thereby increasing the risks of a sailor's life.

This book, though small, is an arsenal of facts for the student, the trades union official, and the social reformer. It proves conclusively that private control and ownership of such a key service as shipping is utterly subversive of the best interests of social life.

B. CRAWFORD.

CO-OPERATIVE PIONEERS

Edward Owen Greening and Sir William Maxwell (Co-operative Union, 1s. 6d. each).

The Co-operative Movement has reached the age when it can say "Let us now praise famous men and the fathers that begot us." These simply written life stories of its pioneers—the first of which, dealing with J. T. W. Mitchell, was reviewed in the November *PLEBS*—clearly reveal the "mixed parentage" which is still apparent in the movement. But they are not mere puffs; *e.g.*, reference is made to the small profits and the absence of control for the workers in Greening's first experiments in co-partnership. For this was his middle path, as against the *consumers'* co-operation advocated by Mitchell and the *producers'* co-operation put forward by Hughes, Neale and the Christian Socialists. (As a monograph on Kingsley is announced we may hope for one on Hughes and Neale, to whose actions frequent references are made.)

Greening lived from 1836 to 1922 and played an active part in many movements. Although the second "Labour" candidate in England (Hali-fax, 1868) he was never more than a Radical and opposed the formation of a Co-operative Party.

Maxwell was more advanced. He wanted more power "to be given to the producers as such, for he held that trade unions might bring the commonwealth appreciably nearer by taking over the industries of the country one by one and working them co-operatively for the benefit of the community at large." Also he advo-

cated participation in politics and welcomed municipal and State provision of social services. Members and employees of Co-operative Societies will find in Maxwell's speeches effective arguments to show both that the Co-operative employee has not always been treated properly, and that he is entitled to a place on the boards of management.

M. S.

THE MINERS

Labour in the Coal-Mining Industry.

By G. D. H. Cole (Milford, 7s. 6d.).

The manufacture of munitions depends upon the production of a smelting fuel, and the industry which provides this is, in wartime, a key industry. During 1914-20 the mining industry held this recognised position in the economy of the nation. It was described by Mr. Lloyd George in his famous Bristol speech as the "life's blood of the nation." Disputes might happen, but they could not be allowed to develop along such broad lines as to become a national catastrophe; the nation's heart-beat must not stop! Peace is declared; munition manufacture on a large scale is temporarily suspended; and the mining industry falls from its proud position.

This is the moral of Mr. Cole's book. He tells us at the outset that it is an objective statement, a narration of facts; which is regrettable, especially when one realises the opportunities at his disposal, during the "Black Friday" episode, for example. Unlike myself, a partisan, who could hardly be expected to see things aright, he was a spectator and might have been able to see things in their right perspective. On p. 7 he says, when commenting upon the miners' isolation, self-sufficiency, loyalty, narrowness, slowness in understanding others, and little skill in arguing before others, that this psychology of the miner "perhaps helps to explain the failure of 'The Mines for the Nation' campaign, and the breakdown of the Triple Alliance in 1920 and 1921."

It will be noted, of course, that this is a half-hearted opinion and as a miners' leader I find it difficult to grasp the reason why the miners should be

blamed any more than the railwaymen or the transport workers. It seems to me that the obvious cause of the failure of the Triple Alliance was the lack of class-consciousness, not only on the part of the masses but on the part of the leaders. It certainly cannot be argued that craft outlook was more dominant in the mining industry than in any other. However, all this may be in accordance with Mr. Cole's terms of reference.

The book is well written, and describes the structure of the organisation in the various Districts. It covers the complete history of the industry during the war period, and gives a full account of the dramatic events leading up to the great lock-out of 1921. The Coal Commission reports of 1919 are detailed, and the various disputes of that year fully described.

One had hoped that Mr. Cole would have dealt more fully with the Versailles Treaty and the international position—how the markets of the world are contracting; how coal produced on date and rice wages claims preference in the world markets, and how Great Britain has now to compete with the surplus capital which its capitalists have dumped in other parts of the world. His method of treatment, in my opinion, tends to over-emphasise the war; for, as the coal-mining industry was the basis of capitalism in the production of steel and iron, so it is the first to reveal the contradiction within capitalism itself, and its inevitable collapse.

TED WILLIAMS,
(Miners' Agent, Garw).

THE UTOPIANS

The History of Utopian Thought. By J. Hertzler (Allen & Unwin).

Those of us who lecture at Labour College classes on such subjects as the development of social theories have often felt the need for a scholarly work dealing with, and critically examining, the ideas of the Utopians. This is the task which Mr. Hertzler has set himself. His survey begins with the biblical prophet, Amos, and ends with the less revolutionary, but much more utopian, Mr. H. G. Wells.

One weakness of the work is due to

the "size" of the subject and the lack of space. But an even more vital defect is the failure to emphasise the far-reaching political consequences of the class-struggle, and its reaction upon those who dreamed of a better social world. Mr. Hertzler does attempt to outline the social and economic background of the great Utopians; had he devoted more attention to the class-struggle of the various periods, his main figures would have stood out more vividly in their historical perspective.

The history of the social Utopians is the record of brilliant and courageous men who drew attention to the anti-social results of private property. Nevertheless our author says:—

Among some of the suggestions of the Utopians doomed to futility . . . are the following: In proposing the communism of goods they flouted the deep-seated instinct of self-interest . . . An ordinary man has to have a personal stake in his job; and no idealism we can inculcate holds out a more effective lure. Ownership appeals not only to the acquisitive instinct, but also to the parental and self-assertive instincts. Fostered and diffused, it makes for social contentment; repress it and disaster follows (p. 303).

We would suggest to Mr. Hertzler that he should leave his study for a few moments and have a look at the present propertied system!

It is interesting to note his contention that "the writings of Karl Marx as early as 1848, mark the turning point in social theory," for if our memory serves us well, the present Prime Minister once described Marx as "the last of the Utopians."

Despite the faults indicated, this book is well worth the attention of serious students of social theory.

W. P.

THE GREAT DIVIDE

The Day Boy. By Ronald Gurner (Grant Richards, 7s. 6d.).

It is a pity that this novel is dull and that its hero is such a bore. It is frankly propagandist and good propaganda (like all good teaching) should grip the imagination or at the very

least keep the attention of its audience. This book does neither.

It is all about a deserving L.C.C. schoolboy who climbed the ladder from the day-school to the university. His activities remind one of the Duke of York in the nursery rhyme, who "had three thousand men—he marched them up a hill and he marched them down again!" Our hero marches onwards from the slums to the glory of a junior mastership in a public school, and then because he has some rudimentary class loyalties he marches back again and takes a job in a secondary school to teach boys of his own class.

Nothing so coarse as the class struggle is mentioned, but the author makes his hero realise dimly that something is wrong with the whole school system. "Next term I go across the Great Divide—back to my own people again"—writes the hero (the Great Divide is the gulf fixed between a large public school and a common or garden secondary school). "I wonder," he continues, "if one day this idea of crossing the divide by going from Harleigh to Stockham will go? At present they are poles apart and the gulf of ignorance between . . . and yet—I suppose it's all rot, but I sometimes have a vague idea of a Harleigh that shall be for the poor as well as the rich," etc., etc.

His tutor, a public-school man, when questioned about this retrograde step on the part of his favourite pupil says, "I believe this, at least—that through Strang (our hero) and all he stands for, salvation will come to England's schools, the rich and the poor, the old and the new, and there shall be the Highway for the People yet."

The tutor is obviously a sympathiser with, if not actually a member of the Left Wing of the W.E.A., blindly groping Pleb-ward! Well, well! Let us hope that the education of the author

will go on until the truth dawns upon him that it is better for a worker to spend his life educating his class as a class, to do away with the whole rotten system of capitalism under which schools and schooling are mere commodities and nothing more, than to tire himself out as an individual climbing ladders which (if he is decent) he has only to climb down again.

W. H.

GEOGRAPHY

Economic Geography—a Study Course for Students. By J. F. Horrabin (Labour Research Department, 6d).

Plebs readers will have already read most of this syllabus in the *Outline of Economic Geography* (which textbook is unfortunately referred to on this cover as a Textbook of Economic "History"). The syllabus will be useful to teachers who have to give short courses or single lectures, and it will provide a useful summary for revision to a student who has read our textbook.

Perhaps the greatest value it will have is that it will bring to the notice of a larger public the importance of geography as a subject for serious study by the workers. It grows daily more apparent that the people who have the clearest outlook on the problems of to-day are the geographers.

R. C. M.

ROBERT OWEN

Robert Owen. By Frank Podmore (Allen & Unwin, 16s.).

This life was originally written in 1906 and is reprinted without alteration. It is the most satisfactory life of Owen that exists—it is far better, for example, than Lloyd Jones—and it is freely illustrated, and well printed. As things are, it is the necessary reference work for the life of the greatest English Socialist (who was a Welshman) and the founder, indeed, of the world Socialist move-

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ment. Yet it has many defects. The author's sense of proportion and his general historical knowledge are not very great. His treatment, in particular, of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, and Owen's share in it, is most inadequate; and it will generally be conceded that this was one of the most important periods of Owen's life.

All the same, such as it is, it is the standard life, and its republication is to be welcomed warmly. The price is too high for the individual reader, but many free libraries could be induced to buy it.

P.

WORKERS' EDUCATION

International Workers' Education
(Published by International Federation of Trade Unions. 1s. 6d. from Joint Publicity Department, T.U.C. and Labour Party).

This is a report of the first International Conference on Workers' Education, held at Brussels, Aug. 16th and 17th, 1922. The speeches dealt in the main, not with principles, but with what was actually being done in various countries.

The most interesting survey of any of the Continental countries is the report on the work of the Belgian Educational Movement. In that report it is interesting to note that at the Belgian Residential Labour College the Principal has the right to reject candidates for scholarships and even, after discussions and *viva voce* examinations, to eliminate, during term, any students found incapable of profiting by the education. In one session of four months the number of students was as a result reduced from twenty-six to twenty-one. This is certainly a course which should be considered by all residential Labour Colleges, as the educational facilities at their disposal are too limited to be wasted on any students manifestly incompetent and unsuited. It is interesting to note that the same Belgian report states "that the best teacher for the adult workers is not the university man or the professional teacher. . . . but the worker who has been educated by working for the Labour movement and by the training of its educational institutions."

A considerable part of the report is

devoted to the activities of the educational and publicity activities of the German Labour Movement, but this section has, no doubt, become out of date in consequence of the present desperate conditions in Germany, which have had a very serious effect on working-class organisations.

Delegate after delegate makes it clear that the purpose of the organisations they represent is to deepen the class-consciousness of the workers and to educate them in order to increase their effectiveness in the class struggle. It consequently tickles the British reader's sense of humour to find the W.E.A. represented. It is like the "dud" egg occasionally found in hens' nests masquerading as the genuine article. On the Continent as a whole, as the report makes clear, there is little dubiety about what is required in working-class education. It is only when we come to Britain that we find that mental confusion which has been such a serious handicap in the intellectual development of the British working class. However, the N.C.L.C. delegates did make it clear that there was a strong educational movement in this country which does not depend on the intellectual crumbs that are dropped from the rich man's table.

One of the points that excited the curiosity of the Labour College delegates from this country was that there were no representatives from the Russian educational movement. In reply to a question, the chairman, H. de Man, stated that no difficulties of any kind had been put in the way of the attendance of any working-class educational bodies. This statement, however, is now contradicted by p. 9 of the report, which states that to the Conference were "invited all the Workers' Educational Organisations in any way connected with the Socialist parties belonging to the Second International or to the Working Union of Vienna, and also all the Trade Union centres affiliated with the International Federation of Trade Unions and all the co-operative national societies affiliated with the International Co-operative Alliance." It will therefore be interesting to know whether the chairman misinformed the Conference, or whether the report is in error.

J. P. M. M.

The NATIONAL COUNCIL of LABOUR COLLEGES

HEAD OFFICE—22 ELM ROW, EDINBURGH

*J. P. M. Millar, General Secretary
(to whom all reports should be sent)*

ANNUAL REPORT.—Copies are now ready—see particulars on another page. This is the first time such a Report has been published and the demand so far has exceeded all expectations. As it may be impossible to reprint, districts which have not yet ordered supplies should do so immediately. The Report should be of considerable assistance in influencing affiliations, and local Colleges might do worse than send a copy to all working-class organisations in their districts along with a circular urging affiliation.

Registers.—Another sign of our substantial progress is that a standardised register for all N.C.L.C. Classes has been printed and every class should now have its attendances marked on these registers. If any Colleges have not yet received supplies they should write to Head Office, and those who have should send cash to Treasurer without delay.

Shop Assistants' Union.—The Scottish Section of this Union carried unanimously the following resolution which is to be submitted to the Annual Conference of the Union at Easter :—
"This Conference of delegates representing Scottish Branches calls on the National Executive Committee to put into operation Rule III, Clause R, and that we affiliate to the National Council of Labour Colleges; further, that the National E.C. be requested to give effect to this resolution forthwith."

We understand that other sections of the organisation are putting forward a more definite resolution reading as follows :—
"That this Conference instructs the Executive to put immediately into operation Rule 3, Clause R, by affiliating to the National Council

of Labour Colleges and arranging through the National Council an Educational Scheme for the provision of free classes and correspondence tuition for the membership of the Union in return for a payment of 3d. per member per annum." We have many supporters in the Shop Assistants' Union. It is up to them to see that they get the Educational Scheme for which they have been waiting for some time.

Other Unions.—We again urge all I.W.C.E. supporters to move a resolution asking their Executives to arrange National Educational Schemes with the National Council of Labour Colleges. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of getting such resolutions passed and it will be a great help if copies of any such resolutions are sent on to Head Office.

Railway Clerks' Association.—It appears that many branches of this Association are thoroughly dissatisfied with the W.E.T.U.C. Educational Scheme. All along the members of this Union have had all the appearance of supporting I.W.C.E., and letters to Head Office indicate that quite a number of branches are determined to raise the question at the next Conference of the Union.

Amalgamation Conference—General Workers, Municipal Employees and National Amalgamated. Thanks to the efforts of J. D. Walmsley the Lancs. Dist. Council of the General Workers asked the Amalgamation Conference to arrange for an N.C.L.C. educational scheme. Keep at it!

N.C.L.C. DIRECTORY—ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS.

Div. 2. *Salisbury Labour College, Sec. :*
M. Cook, 21, Meadow Road,
Salisbury.

Cowes Labour College, Sec. :
Mrs. Saxby, Lawn Cottage,

- Claremont, Cowes, Isle of Wight.
- Dorchester Labour College*, Sec. : Mr. Wilcox, 12, Maie Terrace, Dorchester.
- Bournemouth Labour College*, Sec. : A. Hawkins, 13, South Road, E. Bournemouth.
- Reading Labour College*, Sec. : E. H. Higgs, 47, Albany Road, Reading.
- Banbury Labour College*, Sec. : Percy Gilkes, 32, Parson's Street, Banbury.
- Oxford Labour College*, Sec. : H. W. Prickett, 111, Southmoor Road, Oxford.
- Andover Labour College*, Sec. : C. Jeans, 37, Vigo Road, Andover, Hants.
- Woking Labour College*, Sec. : F. W. Puxley, 23, Percy Street, Woking, Surrey.
- Div. 6. *Newcastle, Staffs. Labour College*, Sec. : W. Bowers, 24, Lawson Terrace, Port Hill, Stoke-on-Trent.
- Div. 10. *Edinburgh District Secretary*, c/o. Millar, 22, Elm Row, Edinburgh.
- Glasgow District Committee*, Sec. : C. Macdonald, 21, Wesleyan Street, Glasgow, E.

WHAT THE DIVISIONS ARE DOING.

Division 1.—London Council has ordered 300 copies Annual Report. Is arranging an essay examination with book prizes for the best essays. New affiliations still coming in but more wanted. Woolwich L.C.'s order for Annual Report is 200.

Division 2.—Classes in Salisbury, Cowes, Ryde, Portland, Dorchester, Weymouth, Bournemouth, Reading, Banbury, Oxford, Swindon, Woking, Guildford (see directory above.)

Division 3.—Twenty-three Parliamentary Candidates have been written to, asking for moral and financial support. 114 A.U.B.T.W. students at the classes.

Division 4.—In order to assist in arousing interest of N.U.D.A.W. members, Miss E. C. Wilkinson is to address a number of meetings. There are now seven Labour Colleges in the Division and it is hoped to have Rhondda and Ammanford Colleges next. A

successful Day-school was held with W. H. Mainwaring as lecturer.

Division 5.—New class formed at Barnstaple.

Division 6.—The Midlands Council of the N.U.C. has affiliated. More classes are to be arranged in Birmingham.

Division 7.—Ashton District Committee of the A.E.U. has asked the A.E.U. Executive to adopt an N.C.L.C. educational scheme.

Sunday night class on Modern Industrial History held in Holyoake Hall, Birkenhead, is under the auspices of the Birkenhead and District Co-operative Society's Educational Committee. The Committee are paying the fees of all Co-operators attending.

Division 8.—J. Munro, one of the Manchester Labour College tutors, has been elected president of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council. Congratulations! Manchester and Liverpool L.C.s have both arranged public lectures. A number of new classes have been organised. Liverpool District's roll of students has reached 750 so far.

Division 9.—Miss E. Wilkinson has been addressing meetings in connection with the N.U.D.A.W. scheme. Durham miners are sending four students to the Labour College annually; motion to compromise with Ruskin met with no support. Our old friend, W. Coxon, the Divisional Organiser, has been approached to stand as a Labour Party candidate. Newcastle has arranged a week-end school with J. T. Walton Newbold as lecturer. North Eastern's order for Annual Report 1,000 copies.

Division 10.—Very substantial development, both in the number of classes and the support coming from working-class organisations. The Scottish Painters' Society has affiliated to the National Committee, while the Bathgate, Dunfermline, and Ayrshire Trades Councils have affiliated to the respective district committees of the S.L.C. Ayrshire district has opened new classes in Kilwinning and Kilmaurs, Lanarkshire in Bedley, Glenboag and Straven. Edinburgh district has opened a new class at Oakbank. New classes have also been formed in Paisley, Perth and Alloa. The new committee in Fife is making excellent progress. Glasgow district committee has lost

its very able secretary, J. Wood, whose occupation has compelled him to move to Birmingham; while Edinburgh district secretary, John Millar, has retired from office after putting in many years of hard and successful work in the Edinburgh area.

Edinburgh's order for Annual Report 500 copies.

Division 11.—Belfast Class has made a good start. Derry Trades Council has been asking for a class, and it is hoped that they will make a start with the assistance of Outline Lectures.

The Miners' Federation Secretaryship

OTHER things being equal, PLEBS would of course be glad to see the secretaryship of the Miners' Federation filled by a convinced I.W.C.E.er. There will probably be more than one of these in the running, and it is not for us to presume to make any individual selection. All the same, we should be delighted to see the nominee of the Northumberland Miners, our old friend, Ebby Edwards, filling the vacant chair. Ebby has done yeoman service to the Labour College movement, and his views on the vital

importance of Independent Working-Class Education have not been in any way modified by the passing of the years.

Among the names which we hear (unofficially) are being canvassed in S. Wales, are those of two or three good friends of ours—one of them a contributor to our review pages this month. We can say no more than "Let the best man win"; but we trust that our friends among the miners everywhere will not overlook the "I.W.C.E. qualification" when making their decision.

Labour College (London) Students' Association

ALL members of our Association in the N.U.R. are asked to give prominence to the fact that there are a few ex-students in the field for the organising and Parliamentary panel of the N.U.R., Frank Ayres and Bob Holder for the Organising jobs, and Frank Lee for the Parliamentary List.

We welcome the publication of the N.C.L.C. *Report*. It will prove very useful to all propagandists, and augurs well for the future of our movement.

The students drafted a resolution lamenting the death of Lenin, and sent same to the proper quarter.

I have had one syllabus from a comrade since my request for same. If comrades would only send me their syllabuses I would be able to enclose in these Notes a few specimens. One series has been drafted out and is called "A Phaseological Survey of History"; it is based upon Muller Lyer's *History*

of *Social Development*, and each lecture brings the subject up to modern times.

Whitsun will soon be here and preparations must be made for our Re-union. Last year's discussions on the subject should be a spur to all comrades to rake up "the necessary" and combine to make it a success. Please send suggestions as soon as possible, so that arrangements can be made beforehand.

Mr. V. Hartshorn, one of the members of the Union's Inquiry Committee, has been appointed to a post in the Government, and it will presumably be necessary to elect a substitute. When this is done, surely no further delay can be excused on the part of those concerned in the holding of the inquiry. In fact, we hope that by the time these words are in print all will be over, the question of students' representation be a fact, and the struggle itself a thing of the past.

A. G. E.

The PLEBS LEAGUE

Secretary's Report : 1923

MEMBERSHIP of the League has increased during the year and stands higher than ever. Most of the local groups are still functioning through their local Labour Colleges, though there are a few cases where the group has lost its identity in the N.C.L.C. work. Few separate reports have been sent in to the League, this of course being due to the fact that detailed reports of class work are now sent to the N.C.L.C., and the League work is closely linked with the district work of the N.C.L.C.

This report is therefore largely a synopsis of the work done by the Executive Committee.

It will be remembered that almost the first duty of the E.C. was to close the retail book department and dispose of the stock. This was done, the bulk being purchased by the Communist Bookshop.

The first Summer School was arranged for September—the place chosen and arrangements being made by the West Riding Labour College Council, backed by the League through the magazine. The School was so successful that a sub-committee of the E.C. was asked to make further arrangements for the coming year.

Publications

Sales of publications have been very good during the year, but our chief difficulty is that we do not get the money in quickly from the districts. The attention of all comrades is called to this appeal. We have to meet our printers' bills quickly, and if we do not get quick payment we are constantly limping along. Reasonably prompt payments would help us to get that margin of profit which would make possible the issue of new books.

We have published during the year *What to Read* (10,000 copies), *Trade Unionism* (10,000 copies), *An Outline of Economics* (5,000 copies), *An Outline of Economic Geography* (5,000 copies). All are selling well, and a reprint of the *Economic Geography* will probably be required before the end of the present

class session. We have sold out the third edition of *An Outline of Psychology* but are happy to say that a reprint will be issued shortly. The worst gap in our shelves is that caused by the selling out of the history textbooks—Starr's *A Worker Looks at History* and Craik's *Short History*. The necessity of a history textbook is apparent and the E.C. are anxiously considering possibilities.

The Magazine

The magazine does not yet quite pay for itself, but it is hoped that the reduction of the price to fourpence will result in a speedy increase of circulation. Plebs Leaguers are urged to do their utmost to assist in this matter, and also (tactfully) to see that literature supplied has been paid for! A little vigilance of this kind would be a great help. Comrades are also asked to rope in as many League members as possible; the very low subscription of 1s. should make this possible, and a large membership of keen I.W.C.E.ers is essential now that our educational movement is developing so rapidly. WINIFRED HORRABIN.

TO PLEBS LEAGUERS

One or two inquirers have written to ask why they did not receive a voting paper for the election of the E.C. The reason (barring the vagaries of the post) is that their names did not appear in our counterfoil book of membership cards. If you have a numbered membership card, then its counterfoil is filed by us. And if you have *not* a membership card, then we have not received your shilling for the year. It may be that your local secretary has failed to send it on to us, or it may be that you *once* paid but omitted to renew last year.

Begin at once to bully us, or your secretary, if having paid your shilling you do not get a card. Also, *always send us your name and address*. This last is important.

Membership subscriptions are rolling in for 1924. Have you sent yours?

THE N.C.L.C.

The N.C.L.C. is the National Council of Labour Colleges, the central organisation of the Labour College Movement. It is composed of the Labour College, London, the Scottish Labour College, 51 non-residential local Labour Colleges, the Plebs League, the Amal. Union of Building Trade Workers, the Distributive Workers, and the Nat. Fed. of Building Trade Operatives.

OBJECT:—The education of the workers from the *working-class* point of view. The Colleges have been built up by working-class organisations, the members of which have realised that only *educated* Trade Unionism is *effective* Trade Unionism. These members have recognised, moreover, that just as it would be ridiculous to join a Trade Union financed by employers, so, for education on social, economic or Trade Union questions, it is equally foolish to support Colleges or classes assisted by employers, or under the influence of educationists with employing-class ideas.

CONTROL:—The control of the Council and of its affiliated Colleges is wholly in the hands of working-class organisations. In consequence of the working-class character of the education provided, these Colleges, like the Trade Unions, get no financial support from State departments, which is a testimonial to the good work they are doing for the Labour Movement.

METHODS:—The principal methods take the form of Evening Classes, Residential Tuition, Postal Tuition, Weekend Schools, Publication of a Magazine, "The **PLEBS**," and Textbooks, and the conducting of Educational Schemes such as those of the Building Trade Workers and the Distributive Workers.

WORK DONE:—During 1922-23 the N.C.L.C. ran 529 classes with 11,998 students and this year these figures will be materially exceeded. The N.C.L.C. has more classes *dealing with subjects of direct importance to the working-class movement* than any other educational body.

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