The PLEBS

Labour Centenary Number

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1825
1925

Labour has grown stronger in a hundred years—

But—

(continued on back cover)

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The Organ of the National Council of Labour Colleges

THE PLEBS

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CONTENTS

OUR POINT OF VIEW

1825 MAX BEER tells us in his *History of British Socialism*, was "the memorable year" which saw "the commencement of the organised and systematic struggle of the British working class." It was the year in which the final repeal of the Combination Acts at last made possible an independent Labour Movement, political and industrial. We of that movement to-day therefore can look back—and, if we are wise, we shall look back—over a century of working-class history; not at all as a mere matter of curiosity, nor out of mere sentimental interest in the lives and actions of the men and women who preceded us; but with the quite definite purpose of finding out, *and understanding*, where and how they failed or succeeded, in order to equip ourselves to carry on the struggle more effectively.

We print this month five articles covering, in broad outline, the history of the century—from the British workers' point of view. The articles do not attempt to chronicle every date, event, or person of importance; but by emphasising the outstanding factors and tendencies at work at different periods to help the working-class student to realise the "ancestry" of some of the problems of 1925. Labour's centenary will doubtless be celebrated in various ways. It cannot be commemorated in any way more usefully than this. What happened in—and since—1825 is important. But what is going to happen in 1925 and onwards—the chapter of history, that is, which we ourselves are going to write—is a matter of more importance still.

More Class-Consciousness

We do not propose here to attempt to "draw the moral" from this survey of a hundred years of struggle; for one thing, because it is too gigantic a task; for another, because we should vastly prefer that classes and groups of Plebs should discuss the articles for themselves, particularly in relation to the problems of our own day. But we may at least stress one obvious "lesson" which emerges—all the more because it is a lesson The PLEBS has always tried to teach, and one, indeed, which the movement for Independent Working-Class Education has made the very basis of all its work: that is the lesson that until Labour thinks, plans, and acts *as a class* our emancipation can never be achieved.

The capitalist press paid a considerable amount of attention recently to Mr. Wheatley's declaration at our PLEBS dinner in London that "the longer he was in public life, the more he believed that until the working class learns that it is engaged in a class war, we can make no progress." With its customary intelligence, the press introduced this with such headlines as "Mr. Wheatley Declares—or Urges, or Preaches—Class War." What we have got to make our fellows realise is that the class-struggle is not a doctrine, to be preached or urged—or disagreed with; but a FACT which has got to be recognised. It is impossible to look back over the history of our movement without seeing that fact. And it is our business to strip away any complexities and superficialities which obscure that fact to-day, and show the workers that it is the main fact that matters.

May we here express our gratification that Mr. Wheatley should have chosen the occasion of The PLEBS dinner to express his opinion that "the Labour Party had nothing to gain by saying they were moderate people—any such attitude would only win the contempt of the ruling class." The supporters of The PLEBS are for the most part rank-and-filers who have been feeling that pretty strongly for some time. They are men and women, moreover, who have been doing their full share of the work of the Labour Party, as well as being active in the industrial field. If the Labour Party is to command their whole-hearted service, its leaders will need to take their stand where more and more of the rank and file are coming to stand—on the basis of the class-struggle, as an organised *class* party. The men and women who in their daily lives are brought up sharp against the harsh realities of capitalism care less and less for the "continuity" of that system—at home or abroad. And they are looking for leaders who will once and for all eschew all desire to convince other classes of the "moderation" of Labour's aims, and will, in season and out of season, say in plain terms that they stand for a revolutionary change in the social order.

Wanted—Plain-speakers and Plain-dealers

It is fitting that we should reproduce in these pages the happy caricature of the President of the N.C.L.C., Mr. A. A. Purcell, which appeared in *Pravda* during the recent visit of the British Trade Union Delegation to Russia. Mr. Purcell is depicted in the holiday garb of a Russian worker, and beneath the drawing he wrote "A desirable caricature. Not unlikely. Anything possible to-day.—A. A .P." We are not sure whether Mr. Purcell means by this that he considers banishment to Russia "not unlikely" in his case—or whether it is the Government or the General Council of the Trades Union Congress which he expects to pronounce sentence! Anyhow—if his banishment is deferred so long—we hope he'll bring his concertina with him to

one of our Summer Schools this year. If he can live up to the suggestion of this portrait he'll be a valuable acquisition.

Back to Marx!

A good deal of horse sense on the subject of revolutionary romanticism was mixed with some amazing balder-dash about Marx in Bernard Shaw's "Tip to Moscow," published in the *Daily Herald* (Dec. 8th). Shaw's doglike devotion to the Apostles of Continuity-at-all-Costs, Messrs. Webb and MacDonald, has always been a bit of a puzzle to his admirers. But he has not always written about Marx in this vein. When he was younger—particularly in spirit—he wrote :—

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

Let us admit that "superstitious reverence," either for Marx or MacDonald, is a silly nuisance. Nevertheless we think that the —shall we say—respect shown for Marx in that passage does Mr. Shaw's critical faculty more credit than his discovery of "the enormous advance on *Das Kapital*" which Messrs. Wells and Webb have made.

PS We have printed an extra number of this special issue of The PLEBS, and we shall need to sell them all if we are not to lose financially. May we rely on all our friends to bring this issue to the notice of as many likely readers as possible, and to do their utmost to win us new subscribers for 1925 ?

A CENTURY of LABOUR 1825—1925

I

THE BEGINNINGS

LABOUR history begins in the eighteenth century, in the public-house. The odds are that, wherever you live, one of the nearest pubs. will be called the Masons' Arms, the Bricklayers' Arms, the Blacksmiths' Arms, the Three Jolly Painters, or some such title. And I have always suspected, though it is incapable of proof, that these names were not unconnected with the early unions. For every " trade club " of the eighteenth century, which can be traced, arose out of the social meeting of craftsmen at the local public-house. Sometimes it was the other way round, the public house gave its name to the union—the Crown Coachmakers, the Globe Coachmakers, the Phœnix Painters, the Running Horse Carpenters, the Marquis of Granby Carpenters, were all London clubs whose names give their origin away. The earliest date from the 1750's ; by 1800 there are many of them.

If we had the privilege of being members of these trade clubs, we should probably be able to watch how their functions changed gradually from club to union. First of all, they were festive societies for beer-drinking and initiating apprentices by grotesque initiations, to protect the craft against strangers from other towns, and so in time to be real unions. Early minute books, like the Preston Joiners' or Manchester Plumbers', show traces of this change, where the saloon-bar atmosphere mingles with that of the committee room. " That each member do Pay 2d. per night for Ale," " To Committy Ale and Officers' Liquor, 15s.," " That all Members swearing be fined 1d.," " That James Metcalfe be fined 3d. for swearing, in consideration of the Nature of his oaths "—such entries show clearly enough the festive character of the old unions, while with them mingle entries of payments to "turnouts" (strikers) which gradually increase and dominate the others.

These unions were not killed by the Combination Acts (1799—1825). They did not even, in most cases, have to work in secret. They had to lie fairly low, it is true, and if they took drastic action, were crushed brutally enough. But while they doddered on quietly they were often let alone. From 1807 to 1816, in the Preston Joiners' minutes, the oldest union record I know, there is an undisturbed record of a humdrum existence.

One of the reasons for this was that then the real strength of the workers was elsewhere. It would have needed a very keen-eyed investigator indeed to spot the forerunners of a great future in the few and bibulous members of the Marquis of Granby Carpenters' Society. The main body of the handicraftsmen, in these days when machines were only beginning to appear, supported, if they did anything, Tom Paine and his *Rights of Man*, and the vigorous agitation of the London Corresponding Society for the principles of the French Revolution. This Society, moreover, took the lead in educating the working class, in order that it might claim its rights. Mr. and Mrs. Horrabin, in their valuable book, tell how "in communication with the London Society were numerous local societies—in Sheffield, Manchester, Bristol, Nottingham, Coventry, Derby, Leicester, Norwich, Birmingham, Leeds, Newcastle, Edinburgh, etc., etc.—partly political groups, partly educational agencies. . . . Everywhere such societies were propagating what in the eyes of the ruling class were 'Jacobinical principles.'"*

But the immature and feeble political organisations of the workers could not yet bear the brunt of the fight, and they were utterly defeated and driven out of existence by Pitt in his famous persecutions. Not until after Waterloo did the Reform movement really revive, and then in a different world. Canals had been built, steam engines and power looms. The Luddites had fought and lost and been forgotten. Green England had given way to black; factories had taken the place of fields.

But still this proletariat, now fully a proletariat in the Marxian sense, followed middle-class leaders. It followed them after the final repeal of the Combination Acts in 1825—a well-known story—right up till the great deception of 1832, the Reform Bill. This famous Reform Bill, after years of fighting and suffering for "the People's Rights," enfranchised only the middle class and excluded the workers. Lord John Russell made it quite clear, moreover, that there would be no more extensions of the franchise, and got the name of "Finality Jack" for his speech.

* *Working-Class Education*, chap. i.

The working-class history of England, from this year 1832 to about 1850, is the history of the reaction and protest against the great deception of the Reform Bill. This protest, as seems to be inevitable in English history, swung from economic action to political in turn. First comes the period of economic action with Owen, and then political action with Chartism. If, indeed, we look over English working-class history as a whole, we find this monotonous alternation as its invariable theme. From the political Painites to the maddened "economic action" of the desperate Luddites; then the political reformers, Hunt and Cobbett; then Owen's Grand National Consolidated Trades Union; then the political Charter, which gives way to Applegarth's new unions with "no politics," which in their turn are shaken and defeated by Keir Hardie and John Burns with their demand for political action for the eight-hour day. From this rises the Labour Party, increasing up to the victory of 1906, until disillusionment at its lack of success follows and from 1911 onwards industrial Syndicalism appears.

Be that as it may, the Builders' Union, the first revolutionary union in this country, was formed in the actual year 1832, but it was not until 1833 that it became prominent. At one time it had 60,000 members. Proportionately to the population that would mean at least 100,000 to-day. Their object was unquestionably a revolution; in the methods that were to be used they accepted the teaching of Robert Owen. Indeed, they accepted it too implicitly. The workers of those days were not merely oppressed; they were puzzled. They desired enlightenment and education which would explain why they were oppressed and the way out, education that would be a weapon in their struggle. "Study to ascertain, we beseech you," ran a resolution addressed by the London Lodges of the Carpenters' Section of the Union, "the cause of our impoverishment and prosecute your inquiries till you have discovered the remedy." Owen, the first Socialist, offered them an explanation which they accepted as a whole. He pointed out that capitalist competition had ruined them, and that the only way out was to take over industry and run it on a co-operative basis. This could be done by overhauling the union machinery—which they did—by setting up a Guild of Producers directed by the Union, and striking against the private capitalist, for eight hours and for control of the job, until he was either forced under or absorbed in the Guild.

The same programme was adopted at the beginning of 1834 by the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, a monster union of all workers, which quickly reached half a million membership. The journals of the movement already began to discuss the system (not unlike the Soviet system) which was to replace the House of Commons.

But this first attack of the workers was met by a well-arranged and devastating defence. The Government arrested and deported the union's organisers—the famous Dorchester Labourers. The union became entangled in innumerable petty strikes, which drained its funds, while its co-operative workshops were never properly under way. Finally the employers presented, up and down the country, the famous "document"—a renunciation of the union which every employee was required to sign. The struggle lasted through the summer; the Grand National and the other unions collapsed and crumpled up. In January, 1834, people believed and hoped that the union would knock the middle class off its perch. In January, 1835, the union was only a memory.

But this defeat only meant that the workers changed their weapons; they did not abandon the struggle. Scattered over the country were Radical clubs, disgruntled still at the great fraud of 1832, and one of these, the London Workingmen's Association, directed by Lovett the cabinet-maker, was working out the main lines of proposals which would give the workers political control. In 1837, in a petition, they worked out the famous Six Points—universal male suffrage, the ballot, no property qualifications for M.P.s, payment of members, equal electoral districts, and annual elections. These were elaborated into a Parliamentary Bill, which was presented to a great meeting at Newhall Hill in 1838, and received the name of the *Charter*.

It was like a match put to a rocket. The relatively comfortable and respectable associates of Lovett were astounded at the way their proposals shot like fire across the country and the strange, famished figures that appeared from the darkness to support them. In the north-eastern coalfields, in Yorkshire, Nottingham and South Wales the Charter was taken up avidly in the strange dialects of the colliers, who in those days lived apart from the rest of the world—and rather feared by it; in the great industrial belt of Lancashire, Derby and Yorkshire, in Scotland and in the Midlands, the women and men factory workers, who worked long hours for wages of a few shillings a week, without Factory Act protection, saw in it the first glimmer of hope. In Lancashire it brought some light even to 60,000 of the most miserable of human kind, the hand-loom weavers, who were dying out in a dreadful endeavour to compete by hand with the great power looms.

From the babel that arose then no clear message could be drawn. These workers still did not, and could not, select leaders of their own class. In Leicester there was Cooper, a reporter, in Bradford Bussey, a publican, in South Wales Frost, a draper, and nationally their greatest leader was O'Connor, an Irish landlord. A petition to Parliament to enact the Charter was sent around ; in a few months it had a million and a quarter signatures. A Convention was summoned—this is the year 1839—to present it, and, if it was refused, to concert further measures. Here a division began to show itself, between Lovett's followers, who insisted on "moral force" methods only and agitation by constitutional means, and O'Connor's "physical force" men who believed a revolution by force would be needed.

The honourable and right honourable members of the House of Commons had decided that such a movement could be handled, and that they need not fear. They rejected the petition. Dissensions rent the Convention, which decided to call a Sacred Month—a month's general strike—but, finding it had no organisation, cancelled it, dissolved and faded away. The action that it would not take was taken by a hardier section. A plot—whose dimensions cannot now be known—was arranged for a national insurrection. The Welsh miners of Monmouth were to give the signal by the capture of Newport. The attempt miscarried, and after a short struggle the miners were beaten outside the Westgate Hotel. The Government rounded up the rest of the Chartist heads at its leisure, and gave them short terms in gaol.

In 1840 and 1841, as they came out of gaol again, the movement began to recover. O'Connor organised it properly in the National Charter Association, and he also pushed out respectable, whining Lovett and his friends. In his weekly newspaper, the *Northern Star*, he worked up a sale which not only provided a large income, but was an unrivalled source of propaganda. Again, they turned to a petition, and so marvellous was O'Connor's organisation that he secured 3,300,000 signatures by 1842, an unheard-of number, which I believe still holds the record for any petition in Europe. Once again the Commons rejected it.

O'Connor was saved in his dilemma by the action of the workers in Lancashire, Cheshire, and Yorkshire, who called a general strike for the Charter. They went round from town to town, knocking the plugs out of the boilers so that no one could work if he would. "Not a chimney smoking ; something great must come of this !" cried the secretary of the National Charter Association as he left Manchester.

But what could come of it ? The strikers and masters faced each other in a starvation struggle, and it was clear who would starve first. The men were unable to follow up their strike by the further step of taking control. So the strike collapsed, and with it the last weapon of the Chartists. The movement was discouraged and disorganised.

Each section went its own way, O'Connor fastening on a worthless smallholders' scheme, until the Irish famine of '45 and the inrush of immigrants stung the people to action again. Chartist agitation revived, big meetings were held once again, and so great was the excitement that O'Connor actually captured Nottingham in the election of '47—by middle-class votes, of course.

But the strength of Chartism was already on the wane when the news of the 1848 revolutions reached London in March. In Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Buda-Pesth and Milan, kings had been overthrown or defeated. Was London alone to remain silent? Chartist passions were artificially fanned into a flame. A new petition was hurriedly sent round; it had six million signatures, said O'Connor; it was to be presented on April 10th; God help the Commons if they refused then! To many on both sides that date meant the date of the Revolution. London was packed with soldiers for the occasion. When O'Connor on the date met his followers on Kennington Common, he saw that any coup, if he had dreamed of it, was useless. He dismissed them, and the petition arrived at Westminster in a cab. Moreover, when it arrived, it was found to have less than two million signatures, including many forgeries, and highly indecorous ones at that.

The Chartist movement was covered with ignominy and ridicule. The groups which started to drill and arm were easily pounced on by the police. The shock of disappointment turned O'Connor's hair white; he wandered night and day, a shambling giant, about the narrow streets off the Strand, picking up fruit or books off the barrows and throwing them down with peals of pointless laughter. Soon his wild manner and senseless behaviour resolved all doubts; he was placed in a private asylum and there ended his days.

With him the Chartist movement passed away, despite the untiring efforts of his lieutenant, Ernest Jones. Its place was taken in due course by a more respectable and steadier movement—the old craft unionism, supplemented by the distributive co-operation whose roots are back in the forties. It did not die because of one ridiculous fiasco in 1848; if ridiculous incidents could kill, no movement would survive. It vanished because its economic roots were injured.

Real palliatives, partly just because of Chartism, were applied to the sufferings of the two main sections of Chartists—miners and factory workers—by the passing, and enforcement by inspectors, of Factory and Mines Acts. The handloom weavers, the third section, as far as can be seen, did in fact die out by starvation, as Professors of Political Economy said they should, which was very pleasing for Professors of Political Economy. Then, after the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, the prices of necessities, particularly food, fell, and so wages rose, though the nominal figure might be the same. By craft unions and "co-ops" certain skilled workers gained also some security.

All these facts amount to this: British capitalism was sweeping the world. Gold in streams was pouring into the employers' pockets. They could, and did, afford to buy off the workers by financial concessions. Real wages rose: for British workers the words "You have nothing to lose but your chains" became untrue; and for that reason they became conservative.

RAYMOND W. POSTGATE.

II

"STABILITY"
(1850—1880)

He would have been a bold man who would have said to the Trade Unionists of the post-1850 period, "How the hell can you old folks tell that you ain't going to strike no mo'?" But if he had, it wouldn't have worried them. How some modern leaders must wish their branches would resolve—as a builders' branch did then—that the very word "strike" should be erased from the dictionary.

Allan and Newton, in the engineering trades, Applegarth amongst the carpenters, and Harnott of the stonemasons, only expressed the need of the times and of their members in guiding their organisations into the quiet paths of industrial peace. The cry of "No politics in the Union" replaced the agitations of the Chartists for political reforms whose denial was to be met by avowed insurrection. And it was assumed that what constituted a "fair day's work and a fair day's wage" could readily be settled at a conference table. To settle disputes by negotiation was a great come-down for men whose fathers had thought of a general strike as a Sacred Holiday—the prelude to a New Moral Era for all mankind. But these fallings away can be easily understood if attention is given to the changed times.

Endowed with natural wealth in coal and iron, and a fine seaboard, and isolated from continental squabbles, Great Britain was, by 1850, enjoying to the full the opportunities afforded by her early application of the fruits of the Industrial Revolution. Land and sea transport meant absorption of displaced workers. Colonial expansion was a safety valve for remaining discontent. Besides, employers found they did not benefit when their "hands" were forced to show they had hearts, and were driven into desperate revolutionary movements. They had learnt that over-exploitation did not pay. Out of the fullness of their prosperity and in order to secure a better frame of mind in their employees, the employers were prepared to treat with the workers and to grant certain concessions.

In particular, they had realised the advantages of propaganda—as compared with police batons. So long as they held the power to decide what was, and what was not, "useful knowledge" for the workers to acquire; so long as they controlled the whole machinery of education, and used it to inculcate ideas favourable to the existing order—so long could they rely on docile workers. The philosophy and the ideals of individualism—thrift, self-improvement, hard work—took the place of class-consciousness; and a Co-operative Movement which appealed to such individualist instincts, and which functioned within the capitalist system, took the place of Owen's earlier vision of a co-operative social order. Capitalism had achieved temporary stability, and its "benefits" were sufficiently apparent, at least to the higher grades of workers, to stifle any wish for a change of system.

But abstention from political agitation was not long permitted to the workers' organisations. With as little idea of any larger aim as in their participation in the First International, the trade unionist leaders—the men of the Junta—were forced, notably in 1867, to rally the trade unionist vote as such. In these days, when there are rumours of a Tory Government "rescuing" the trade union "minority" from the tyranny of majority rule, it is well to recall the circumstances which forced the unions to use their influence in the lobby of the House of Commons and in the country half a century ago. Using an isolated case of terrorism at Sheffield as an argument, the employers were able to set up a Commission of Enquiry which put the continued legal existence of the unions in the balance. There was also the adverse judicial ruling that unions could not prosecute defaulting officials. Further, to prove that the law could give as well as take away, in the same year, 1867, a gross inequality against the worker was removed by the passing of the Master and Servant Act, which put master and worker on an equal footing in case of a breach of contract.

The success which attended the unions' efforts to secure legal status and the protection of their funds (1871) and in the legalising of picketing in 1875, proved to the workers once more the use of political agitation. Incidentally, the organised agitation for these reforms led to the formation of important Trades Councils and of the Trade Union Congress, which sanctioned the two first Labour members who, in 1874, first carried the Labour standard into the House of Commons.

Stable and peaceful relations with the employers and the capitalist system became more impossible from the eighties onward. Even in the previous decade Joseph Arch had organised many of the farm labourers, and the unions of the railway industry had begun. Undoubtedly many British employers would have liked to have kept the Model Unions and their members contented, and to see organisation confined to the better-off artisan. But world competition from Germany and America forced the British capitalists to cut down expenses ; their unchallenged supremacy was ended. Out of this soil grew the new Unionism, which spread to classes of unskilled and women workers previously untouched. These had no craft to preserve, and could not afford to pay high contributions. The unions that were formed had small if any friendly benefits. They relied upon mass action, and were against lengthy wage contracts. Leaders like Mann, Burns, Tillett and others attacked the older unions as mere conveniences to capitalism. The development of Socialist propagandist bodies was further evidence that the idea was dawning that—contrary to the opinion of the Model Unionists—there could be no fair deal for the workers *inside* capitalism, and hence they must by legal enactment and industrial organisation take steps to get it *outside*. The old illusion of " stability " was fading, along with the British monopoly on which it had been based. The era of Economic Imperialism was dawning ; and the class-struggle in Britain—after the " lull " of the sixties and seventies—was entering upon a new and sterner phase.

MARK STARR.

III

SIGNS OF CHANGE IN THE 'EIGHTIES

THE Fabian Society began its activities as far back as 1883. At about the same time the group that subsequently became the Social Democratic Federation was formed. Both of them arose out of a new spirit of social inquiry which was abroad at this period of the Victorian era. There was already beginning a certain amount of discontent at the smug Liberalism, which in its zeal for " individualism " would sacrifice the individual on the altar of *laissez faire* in order to keep the fires of the profit-making machine running. This intellectual discontent found expression in the foundation of societies for inquiry into social conditions, and the most influential and ultimately the most effective of these were the Fabians and the Social Democratic Federation. According to Shaw (footnote, Fabian Tract No. 41, *The Fabian Society : Its Early History*), " the Fabian Society was warlike in its origin." It arose out of a society for raising and perfecting moral and personal character, and dissatisfaction with the Utopian nature of its aims caused the more practical and also apparently the more militant spirits to break away and start on a campaign of agitation. Along with the S.D.F., the Fabians in these early days went in for street corner work and did not apparently mind risking a conflict with the police. But soon the practical nature of their minds began to assert itself. From working out anarchistic plans for transforming wage payment to labour tickets, the Fabians settled down to the task of finding what practical steps could be taken to improve the lot of their fellow men under the existing circumstances.

Their task was made easier towards the end of the eighties. Up till then the S.D.F. had been more in the public eye. During the greater part of the eighties the working class had been suffering from the general trade depression. A series of bad harvests in the seventies and the development of the prairie lands of America had brought disaster to British agriculture, while the industrial growth of France and Germany after their recovery from the Franco-Prussian war had intensified one of the usual cycles of trade depression in this country. The result was that the masses were in a mood to listen to the emotional appeal of Socialism, and demonstrations with red flags were the order of the day. The movement culminated in the great Trafalgar Square meeting in 1887 and the conflict with the police, but just as it seemed that a revolutionary situation was developing, trade revived and the unemployed were absorbed again into the industrial system, while agriculture gradually became reorganised on the basis of grazing and pasture ranches. The agitation of the S.D.F. gradually petered out, and the public mind was ripe for the practical criticism of the social analyst. This was provided by the Fabians.

The eighties of last century seem to have been a time when the political programmes of parties and the educational curricula of societies underwent a spring cleaning. And it corresponded, moreover, as those of us who look on history from the angle of the M.C.H. can easily grasp, with the changes which were taking place in the Mid-Victorian national economy of England. The wealthy cotton merchant of Lancashire or the London trader in East Indian spices, having amassed a fortune, had acquired a country estate. His surplus funds were invested in colonial bonds, and he was having a flutter in some concession in Asia or Africa. He had ceased to be interested in inveighing against the squire, because he had become one himself; he had forgotten his diatribe against the parson because he was now in possession of the gift of a living. Having been a fervent opponent of imperial expansion in his youth, and having been in favour of the dissolution of the Empire, he now applauded the bombardment of Alexandria in the interest of the international bond-holders. All his life a staunch Free Trader, he now felt that Free Trade was only good if it was universal, and he toyed with "Fair Trade" and protected spheres of interest in colonial areas. The crisis in the Liberal Party in the eighties was only nominally over Home Rule; in reality it was caused by the secession of large Whig magnates who had become finance and land capitalists. And so it was within the British Labour movement. Trade Unionism had been solely concerned with protecting the interests of its members and providing them with benefits against sickness and old age. But now, while the workers saw great wealth amassed in the hands of a few, their own condition remained much the same, and the time was ripe for an inquiry into whether this profit-system was, after all, a social necessity.

Early in the century Owen had led English progressive thought into Utopian by-ways. He had asked his followers to eschew political action on the grounds that the State was an anti-popular institution. Seeing, as he did, the administrative departments of the Government filled with the sons of county families, he convinced himself that the State was something past praying for. He doubted the power of trade unions to challenge this citadel of Tory landlordism, and so he advised his people to concentrate only on creating little collectivist communities, like islands, in the sea of capitalism, in the hopes that those islands would somehow grow and dry up that sea. Half a century later the S.D.F., following Marx, who in 1848 was fighting against feudal absolutism in Prussia, called on the workers to conquer political power and revived the Chartist cry—"Peacefully if we may, forcibly if we must." Both Morris and Hyndman at this period of their careers seem to have doubted the possibility of winning Socialism except by violence. They believed most fully in the dynamics of the class struggle, and were prepared to use all acute situations, created by capitalistic anarchy, to rally the masses to their banner for a final assault.

But with the disappearance of the revolutionary situation of the eighties the revolutionary Marxians lost their influence, and once more British capitalism launched out on a new period of colonial expansion which brought new orders for the construction industries of the Midlands and quieted those who were inclined to be rebellious. But the lessons of the recurring crises in the capitalist system seem to have sunk into the minds of the group of intellectuals who founded the Fabian Society. The idea of preventing the anarchy of production for profit began to grow. The scientific brain of Sidney Webb, when coupled with the artistic temperament of Bernard Shaw, produced the groundwork on which the first *Fabian Essays* were produced.

The *Essays* had this in common with Marxian writings, that they recognised the dissolution of one form of society by another, and foresaw transition periods. They traced the development of society from feudalism through mercantilism to industrialism, and if they did not allow for the latest phase of capitalist accumulation in its financial form, with colonial expansion and Imperialism, for that matter neither did the Marxists of that day. Where they differed from the Marxists fundamentally was in tactics. Both believed in the conquest of political power, but the Marxist believed that it could be only won by the workers, and that all methods might be necessary. The Fabians on the other hand, saw that in England the democratic franchise was almost fully in operation. With a few anomalies out of the way adult suffrage would be there. They saw no reason to doubt that the ballot-box would get all that was required. There was no three-class franchise as in Prussia, no suppression of elementary political liberties as in Russia, and so the Fabians conceived the idea that it would be possible for the working class to vote the country into Socialism. But the most characteristic feature of the tactical side of their programme was their belief in the possibility of permeating the whole country with their ideas, and inducing the capitalist class and its dependents to agree to Socialism by consent. They held up as ridiculous the claim of the S.D.F. that Socialism would only be ushered in when there was a " united nation of subscribers to the party." " Our business," said Bernard Shaw (Fabian Tract No. 41), " will then be not to talk crudely about the class war, with very cloudy notions as to the positions of the two camps and the uniforms of the two armies, but to organise it scientifically so that we can drain the opposite host of every combatant whose interests really lie with ours."

Faithful to this principle, the Fabians always kept their numbers small. They never aimed at creating a mass party, as the S.D.F. failed to do in the eighties and the I.L.P. did with conspicuous success in the nineties and after. They advised their members to enter other parties and associations, to get elected to public and semi-public bodies, and there to sow the seed of Socialism. One thinks involuntarily of " cells " and imagines them to be of Muscovite origin. I have no doubt that Moscow would not be pleased to think that the tactics of the Comintern as far as permeation of existing bodies is concerned, was an approved tactic of the Fabians thirty years ago. Whether it has been as succesful in the former case, as it undoubtedly was in the latter, I will not discuss here. In one thing, however, the Fabians seem to have mistaken the power of permeation. As a reaction against a simple appeal to the masses at street corners, in the manner of the S.D.F., they seem to have over-estimated their powers of persuasion of the ruling classes and of those who have been brought up in their service. They have not taken into consideration the industrial power of the capitalist class, which modern Marxian criticism maintains is the basis of political power. Even the logic of a Webb and the annihilating satire of a Shaw is poor armoury against the attraction of a fixed salary and a comparative certainty of no worries. As long as capitalism can pay its slaves, one may be permitted to suggest that there are limits to Fabian permeation of the capitalist system.

The Fabians also do not seem to have reckoned with the power of vested interests to influence the democratic vote by intimidation and fear of unemployment. But this is a common phenomenon in general elections in all countries where the democratic franchise exists. The Fabians do not seem to have seen that the manual wage-earning class has of necessity been the class whose economic interest has given them a greater concern for a change of the social system than any other. And because of their failure to see this, they have tended to see society as a whole, and to minimise, if not deny, the existence of the class struggle, which, in one form or another, is the outstanding fact of society.

This is, of course, explicable in view of the fact that the older school of Fabians drew their spiritual inheritance largely from J. S. Mill. The latter, as pioneer in the movement to break away from the orthodox *laissez faire* economists of the Ricardo school, was a protagonist of the democratic state and a forerunner of the Fabians in his demand for the right of the State to tap the unearned increment of wealth derived from land. Webb, however, carried Mill's reasoning further, and claimed that unearned increment was not only found in land, but in all processes of production, and that "rent is a genus of which land rent is but one species." The firm insistence with Mill by the old school of Fabians on the democratic franchise as the sole weapon of emancipation, caused a Left Wing in the Fabian Society to rise, which began to stress the importance of the industrial organisation of the workers with a view to their attaining ultimate control over the machinery of production. Subsequently the formation of the Guild Socialists was a sign that a new phase of the Labour movement in England had been reached, and that the younger spirits were not contented with the purely parliamentary aspect of the process of emancipating the working-class, and were demanding greater concentration on industrial organisation. Once again industrial developments in the country were the forerunners of mental outlook and educational demands. The creation of trusts and combines, amalgamation of capital, and the introduction of new machinery brought problems of speeding-up and hidden methods of exploiting factory labour which could only be tackled in the branch meeting of the trade union. And so we come to a new phase of working-class thought which brings us into contemporary history.

The Fabians may be said to be the English equivalents of the Reformist Socialdemocrats in Germany, when the latter came out from illegality after the abolition of Bismarck's Socialist Law in 1890. But, of course, there are differences. The *Erfurt Program* in 1891 shows that the German Socialdemocrats were demanding things which had already been long granted in England. They were faced with the need to bring a junker-ridden Prussia into line with modern capitalist democratic states in the matter of franchise and rights of free speech. But the social side of the programme—protection of labour, the Fabian demands for gradual taxation of capital with a view to ultimate nationalisation, the use of the parliamentary machine and the function of a democratised and enlightened civil service—was there in the *Erfurt Program*, as it was in that of the Fabian Society. Fabianism arose out of a demand for inquiry into the prospects of a gradual change of the present social system at a time when capitalism was flourishing and well able to feed its slaves. So also did German Reformist Socialdemocracy arise after a period of Bismarckian repression at a time when German junker-heavy industry-Imperialism was expanding across two continents and preparing for the clash of arms which was to come in 1914.

M. PHILIPS PRICE.

IV
THE RISE OF THE LABOUR PARTY (1900—1925).

THE years 1900 to 1925 are the period of fully developed Imperialism. In this period, as a necessary outcome of capitalist development, there falls the first Imperialist World War. Out of the social crisis created by the war comes the World Revolution, which, defeated for the time in most countries, remains and is consolidated in Soviet Russia. Against this background we have to view British history in these twenty-five years.

Imperialism—in its essence, monopoly capitalism as opposed to competitive capitalism—has been defined as having certain economic characteristics : there is the domination of monopolies and of finance capital : export of capital (as opposed to export of goods) has become very important ; the sharing of the world between great international trusts has begun ; the partition of all the countries on earth amongst the great capitalist powers is complete. There follows :

(1) A growing bitterness in the struggle between the working class and the bourgeoisie (but a section of the working class, doing well out of Imperialism, begins to support it).

(2) A growing revolt amongst the subject nations against the Imperialist powers.

(3) Armed conflict between the Imperialist powers, followed by armed peace, the prelude of further conflict.

Of these struggles within the world of imperialism, the last bulks largest in most people's eyes, partly because they see it as some dreadful accident, a "Scourge of God." But even though to Marxists war is not "an accident"; yet the fierce flame of catastrophe makes it the centre of our vision and throws light and shade over all other events that come before or after. In its light we can see the tendencies of the pre-war Labour Movement with exceeding clearness. We can see the figures moving as if unconscious that their day was coming to an end (though International Socialist Congresses, one after another, Stuttgart, Copenhagen and Basle, had proclaimed the imminence of world war). Thus, though scarce eleven years have passed, and though most of the pre-war personalities are still alive, we can survey these opening years of the century in their strange illumination, and can reach a historic understanding of the actual period in which we live.

What were the new forms of working-class organisation developed in Great Britain, the oldest Imperialist country during these twenty-five years? To answer this question merely by reciting details of names and constitutions is only to give the raw material for a real answer. For a full understanding we must go further afield. The great bourgeois historian Maitland once said that only by studying the law of Germany, France and other countries was it possible to see and to describe the Laws of England. In the same way it is only by looking at the European working-class organisation, and particularly at the close-knit German organisation which was regarded as the developed type and model for the European proletariat that we begin to realise how loose, scattered, and separate was the structure of our Movement. In place of a strong socialist party, closely linked-up social democratic unions and co-operative societies, controlling some scores of daily and weekly newspapers, directing in proletarian classes that "Education towards Revolution" of which Morris spoke, we have had instead an extremely powerful but unco-ordinated trade union movement, a wealthy co-operative movement entirely unconnected with anything else and entirely innocent of any idea of class-struggle, a bunch of little parties, a number of separate self-made newspapers, and for every sort of other activity, a separate body, and often rival bodies.

But behind all this, during these years, there was a growing consciousness of the workers as a class.

All these struggles are mirrored in the history of the Labour Party, formed in 1900 under the title of Labour Representation Committee. In the previous year the Trades Union Congress had declined to organise independent Labour candidature, but had sanctioned the formation of a separate body for this purpose for such trade unions as wanted to do it. The Labour Representation Committee was composed of representatives of the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society and the Independent Labour Party ; of certain national trade unions and trades councils and one co-operative society. Of the three socialist societies, the I.L.P. was for long the most influential. For the S.D.F. under the leadership of H. M. Hyndman, cried off in the second year of the L.R.C. ; and though its successor, the British Socialist Party, joined up again in 1916, it was too late for a Marxist body to exercise any big influence. The Fabian Society, on the other hand, persisted right up to the war with its policy of permeating the capitalist parties ; and could not give the Labour Party undivided attention.

The Labour Party was thus a federal body, uniting certain trade unions which considered that the sectional economic interests of their members could best be represented by candidates standing on a Labour platform, together with certain socialist societies. There was no individual membership. The trade unions supplied the bulk of the money ; and, though they did not as yet aspire to call the tune, they were the real basis of the organisation. They are still the basis, notwithstanding the network of local Labour Parties that has grown up, and the formation of an individual members' section in 1918. In this it differs, in form, from nearly all other European countries.

To understand the developing policy of the Labour Party and the struggles within it, we must again turn to the international field. Here, in the International Socialist Congresses, we can see clearly, without being hindered by local peculiarities, the main outlines of the struggles going on within working-class parties.

Various important questions, such as the participation of Socialists in bourgeois governments, the question of "Empires" were fully discussed. But with each succeeding Congress, it became clear that the chief struggle was between revolutionary socialism and reformist socialism. The Reformists, or Opportunists as they were often called, were defeated in successive congresses ; but between congresses their policy (expressed in this country as "class-harmony") was more and more put into practice.

What was the position in Britain ? The only party calling itself Marxist was not Marxist enough to understand the need of remaining associated with the trade unions. The Fabian Society, whose leading members were supporting the Boer War, could be classed as pro-Imperialist. The I.L.P. was expressly anti-class struggle in its pronouncements. In spite of this, however, there was a strong class feeling amongst the rank and file of the I.L.P. and the whole life of Keir Hardie was an expression of class struggle. But these tendencies were not allowed to develop. The trade union officials who spoke for their unions threw their weight against revolution and in favour of opportunism. It was natural for them, trained in the school of collective bargaining, to put forward an empirical view; and trade union empiricism (the rule of thumb view as opposed to the wide-ranging, broadly-based theory of Marx) won the day. Under these conditions each successive union affiliating to the Labour Party was bound to dilute its socialism, unless the stiffest fight were to be put up. That fight was not forthcoming. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, the first Secretary of the L.P., had always repudiated class-struggle; and after his election in 1906 he began more and more to be recognised as the supreme parliamentary tactician and leader of the Labour Party.

In 1905—6 the agitation for the Trades Disputes Act (to protect Union funds) brought new unions into the Party, and the General Election of 1906 saw twenty-nine Labour Members returned to Parliament. In 1908 the Miners' M.P.s (who had previously sat as Liberals) joined the Party. The result of all this dilution of Labour was as might be expected. There had been great expectations amongst the workers, and now there was great disappointment. When, after 1910, the Labour Party was in tacit coalition with the Liberals, the disappointment became unbearable.

All this time the revolutionary class feeling amongst the workers had been growing. The Marxian socialist societies continued their agitation. Echoes of the I.W.W. began to reach Britain. Amongst the wide masses of workers a real discontent was fermenting, and

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perhaps its best written expression is found in the opening issues of a magazine founded in 1909 by a group of working-class students at Ruskin College. It was reinforced by the Syndicalist propaganda of Tom Mann, John McLean, and many others. " Syndicalism " with its denial of politics, and emphasis on direct action, was the answer to the parliamentary lethal chamber in which the hopes of the working class were being smothered. The struggles of 1910 in the Rhondda were of a revolutionary quality. With 1911 the Great Strikes began.

Out of a printers' strike in January, 1911, the *Daily Herald* was born ; and, with a short interval, ran as a daily up to September, 1914. It served as a focus for all discontents. Its cartoonist, Dyson, was fiercely anti-parliamentarian and anti-MacDonald. So was the rest of the paper, to which his startling drawings gave the tone. It helped syndicalism, and was frequently anti-trade union official. Its official rival, the *Daily Citizen*, begun in the autumn of 1912, led a pallid whitewasher's existence beside it.

By the beginning of 1914 the Reformist policy of the Parliamentary Labour Party was largely discredited ; the positive revolutionary policy was still to be found. The syndicalists had begun to lose their congregation. The C.L.C. and The PLEBS were still struggling for existence. *Justice*, the Social Democratic organ, was dominated by Hyndman, who had become an anti-German. The *New Age* was propounding Guild Socialism. The Fabians were founding the Fabian Research Dept. to discover the cause of these troubles and the means of canalising them.

The British Labour Movement was in yeasty fermentation ; the froth was plain to see ; but no one could say what would be the brew.

On this movement, with its lack of a strong positive revolutionary party, with its Reformism discredited and its spontaneous class-consciousness coming up in " rebel " movements and papers, there fell like a thunderbolt the Imperialist War. To tell again the miserable story of how workers' representatives hounded on workers of this country to kill their fellow-workers in a Capitalist War, would take too long. The main point to be brought out here is the effect on the tendencies within the Labour Party. The war brought out not two but three tendencies—*Jingo*, *Pacifist*, *Revolutionary*.

The *Jingo* tendency engulfed the trade unions and their officials for the most part ; the Fabians, a certain number of " rebels " from the *Daily Herald*-Syndicalist-Guild Socialist camp ; and the majority of the Social Democrats. In the main the pre-war opportunists became war-mongers, and a few others with them.

The *Pacifist* tendency embraced the remainder of the *Daily Herald*-ites ; and the I.L.P. majority, headed by MacDonald, Snowden and W. C. Anderson. At first the Reformist pacifists held rather apart from the "rebel" pacifists and made common cause with anti-war Liberals in the Union of Democratic Control; and with religious anti-war sects and individuals in the No Conscription Fellowship. But soon the "rebels" followed meekly.

The *Revolutionary* tendency at first appeared to consist of John McLean, who, with his agitation, speeches, leadership of strikes and demonstrations, classes "educating towards revolution," was a party in himself. This tendency was partially reinforced by the S.L.P., by the minority of the B.S.P., and by writers in The PLEBS.

The war thus had the effect of obliterating the variegated tints of the pre-war period, and presenting instead this three-colour picture of the movement. Then the Russian Revolution came, and with it an awakening, an impulse towards a new outlook. The wave of revolutionary feeling for three years after 1917 nearly brought about a coalescence of the Pacifists and the Revolutionaries. In 1919 joint meetings were being held of the leaders of the I.L.P., B.S.P. and S.L.P. to discuss fusion.

But the Jingo right wing was also ready to come to an accommodation with the Pacifist centre. The Labour Party in 1918 had adopted a Fabian programme and a new constitution. The numbers of trade unionists and consequently the size, prestige and importance of the Labour Party, were constantly increasing. Gradually, the Pacifist Centre returned to the Reformist camp. By 1922 the fusion was complete. Meantime, the revolutionary tendency continued, much of it being gathered up into the newly formed Communist Party (August, 1920).

So that within a year or two after the war there stood out, as before the war, two main tendencies, one Revolutionary Socialist, one Reformist. But the difference from the pre-war position consisted in this, that the distinctions were now much more clearly drawn; and that the Reformist tendency was enormously more powerful and effective than ever before. It seemed the burial of Marxism.

But Marxism was not dead; and the events of 1923—4, with tremendous rapidity, have made it very much alive. In two short years far-reaching changes have been set in motion. Twenty-five years of Imperialism ended with a Labour Government; and the Labour Government ended with the Right Wing officials in control of the machine, desperately fighting to stem the rising tide of revolutionary feeling among the masses.

In the beginning of this survey of the workers' struggle and of the tendencies that helped or hindered it then was set out the triple contradiction, the threefold violent conflicts that mark the period of Imperialism.

Against this background appeared in the foreground the Triumph of Reformism, the successful formation of the Labour Government. But to become a Labour Government is a most searching test of Reformism. Put to this proof, it was suddenly discovered from the *deeds* of the Cabinet that whatever doubts might be entertained of the policy of the Labour Government in trade disputes, etc., there could be no doubt that in the struggle of the subject nations for independence, the Labour Government stood for maintaining Imperialist rule; or that in the struggles and rivalries between the Imperialist powers (called Foreign Policy) it stood for a continuance of British Imperialist policy, even if it meant something like the Dawes Report, something demonstrably against working-class interests.

The beginning of that discovery by the workers is the beginning of the end of Reformist politics in the working-class movement. It is the beginning of a new period of Marxism and revolutionary growth in the working class. These twenty-five years of Imperialism, of worsening conditions, of the barbarities of war and the beggary of peace, of denial of class-struggle and the sorry results of that denial, have been in the bitterest sense a real "Education towards Revolution."

R. PAGE ARNOT.

V

TRADE UNIONISM SINCE THE WAR

THE war period was the heyday of the old-fashioned, penny-in-the-slot trade unionism. "Join the union and get a rise in wages" was the slogan which brought thousands into the movement. The old union quarrels went on as hotly as ever, immeasurably embittered by the "combing-out" processes which set craft against craft and union against union.

The old competitive trade unionism broke down in the workshop under stress of war conditions exactly as private enterprise broke down in the sphere of war supplies. Side by side with the old craft unions there arose, out of the hard necessities of the men, workshop organisation of the workers against the common employer. Shop stewards elected on the spot, backed by threats of a lightning strike, were often able to settle with the employer in minutes matters which the cumbrous machinery of overlapping unions could not settle in as many weeks. This *ad hoc*, and for that matter, ephemeral, organisation was the hotbed in which germinated ideas of workers' control, industrial unionism, and, above all, the feeling of class solidarity in the workshop breaking through the walls of the old craft divisions.

1919—20 were critical years. The influence of the Russian Revolution, before the Press got the "Bolsh" scares really going, was increased by the disgruntled soldiers and the stories of mutiny in the army. The trade unions had full coffers and were at the height of their wartime prosperity. Looking back now, it would seem that that was the moment for the decisive struggle. But the mass of the unions, like the speculators, rushed gaily into the fight for more wages for their members, often without consultation between different unions on the same plant. Forty unions asking for different things, at different times, from the same employer, was no uncommon occurrence.

The only challenge to the owning caste was made by the miners, who, during the war years had been strengthening the industrial basis of their union. Their demand for national ownership of the mines and a partnership in control by the miners might have been the rallying point of the movement.

The special Trade Union Congress which endorsed Direct Action to help the miners flashed in the pan. The Triple Alliance loomed as an ominous shadow across capitalist society, but the battle was to be not of strength but of wits. Big Business was fighting on interior lines with a master strategist at its head. The multifarious union executives hardly realised that there was anything more afoot than the continuation of the demands for wage increases. Big Business was out to down a class that had nibbled at the fringes

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of power. The unions replied by asking for another "two bob a week."

The miners' agitation was cleverly side-tracked by the Sankey Commission. The unions were kept quiet by the Temporary Regulation of Wages Act, by which Big Business prevented the smaller rut of employers spoiling the game.

During the critical year of 1920 the Trade Union Congress was forced by pressure from the trade unions to call a Special Conference to consider the unemployment crisis which was felt to be coming. This conference met in London and decided to adjourn for a month. It met again to pass a printed unamendable resolution, and Mr. Thomas promised to raise the question of unemployment in Parliament.

The crash came in the beginning of 1921. Versailles had undermined the position of the British workers. Blacklegging on an international scale had been arranged and all was ready for a full trial of strength. The sudden de-control of the mines indicated that the miners had been chosen to bear the first brunt of battle. And the Triple Alliance did not function.

It is usual to seize on that spectacular breakdown as the great betrayal of the workers—the moment from which all subsequent troubles can be traced. But the Triple Alliance was beaten long before Black Friday. To be successful the fight should have taken place at least eighteen months earlier. The older leaders can say with truth that the workers who had just voted in hordes for Lloyd George were not exactly in a revolutionary temper. Still, the sensational victories of Labour in the local council elections of 1919 showed how rapidly the feelings of masses of workers had veered round. The trade union movement, with its myriad organisers and speakers, only gave one class call—by the Council of Action; and the workers responded magnificently. On the vital questions of trade union policy to meet the dangerous situation of the workers, in place of a mass call and mass enthusiasm, there were endless dreary demarcation disputes and petty wage struggles.

This brings us to the fundamental fact that unless the workers learn to think in terms of *class-struggle*, all the machinery of the Triple Alliance and new amalgamations simply make guns that cannot be fired. Because the trade unions had made little attempt to educate the new membership, when the capitalist offensive swept through the industries and reduced wages by nearly twelve million pounds a week, one and a half millions of workers left the unions. The events of those two years are too recent to need recapitulation here. The shop steward movement was broken in the workshop by the victimisation of the stewards, who soon reappeared with heroic energy as the founders of the National Unemployed Workers'

Committee Movement. The work of that organisation, fighting alongside every striker, preventing the attempt to use the unemployed as wholesale blacklegs, although refused affiliation to the T.U.C., showed what could be made of a Labour movement by a strong *class* appeal in place of the sectional loyalties which have made the unions so helpless in the storm.

But beneath all the defeats the masses were stirring. A whole working class was being forced into semi-starvation which had known for three or four years what it was to be fairly decently fed. The discontented ex-soldiers were not quite the easily drilled material that the major-generals of the "Comrades of the Great War" expected to find. The attack on the teachers and the black-coated proletariat brought a section over to Labour which had been among the most energetic defenders of capitalism. The Guild Movement, though it fluttered and died in impossible conditions, was a useful object lesson of what might be done in certain trades, and the new idea was officially backed by the unions concerned. The Building Workers led the way in another important movement which will have far-reaching consequences, when they officially financed a scheme of independent working-class education for their members, an example which was quickly followed by the N.U.D.A.W. and other unions.

The unemployment figures grew so rapidly that the most orthodox trade union leaders were startled out of their complacency. The Trade Union Congresses of these years form a most interesting barometer of official feeling. Ideas that were "shrugged out" at Southport in 1922, formed the subject of embittered controversy at Plymouth in 1923, and were received with enthusiasm in 1924 at Hull. The various eddies seem to have formed themselves into three main currents of working-class opinion, the urge towards unity, the urge towards rank-and-file expression, and the urge towards a system of class-conscious education.

It was possible for example for Mr. Davis, the veteran General Secretary of the Brassworkers, in his farewell message to his members in 1921, to boast as his crowning achievement that he had successfully prevented amalgamation with other metal unions because they had slightly different sick benefits. But by 1923 the current towards amalgamation had become a spate. The great amalgamations of the Transport, the General Workers, and the Engineering Unions are the biggest features of a movement that even yet is only gathering strength. The General Council was instructed by Congress to encourage and even take the lead in suggesting further amalgamations.

The urge towards unity was the motive force of the agitation to increase the powers of the General Council. The idea of the Council as a general staff of a militant trade union movement is perhaps at present what Sorel would have called an "energising myth." Anyway, the Council has now received powers to co-ordinate the action of various unions during a dispute and to collect and distribute information on any big wage movement.

With this movement towards giving the central authority some sort of power to get the national unions to work together, there has been a healthy striving after rank-and-file expression, of which the most important manifestation was the coming together of many of the Trades Councils into a national federation. The Trades Councils, excluded from Congress since 1895, had been the only means by which local trade union branches could express their views on industrial affairs otherwise than by transmitting them to their own head offices. The Federation made such rapid progress that the General Council hastened to form a Joint Committee. The Council has been accused of nobbling the Federation to counteract unofficial influences, but whether that proves to be true depends on the Trades Council representatives. One cannot urge unity and then complain when it is achieved. The Minority Movement, inspired by the Communist Party, is perhaps less promising. The Trade Union executives have not unnaturally raised the cry of "no outside interference in trade union affairs." The movement has made some headway among the miners, but it is doubtful whether any "minority movement" inspired by an extraneous political party and not thrown up spontaneously by conditions inside the unions can have much effect.

The struggle for independent working-class education passed its propagandist stage and aimed at securing schemes backed by the various unions to give such education to their members as would provide in the future a trade union membership that understood thoroughly the history and economic basis of their daily struggle. The speeches, even more than the vote at the Hull T.U. Congress, showed how completely "university extension" ideas of education had been superseded by the "working-class" conception.

The unexpected coming into office of a Labour Government just one hundred years after the repeal of the Combination Laws raised great hopes in the trade union movement. Even left-wing leaders urged that there should be a cessation of strikes so as not to embarrass the Ministers. Could the Labour Government be the Executive Committee of the working class as previous administrations had been of the owning classes? The threat of the use of the Emergency Powers Act during the Transport strike was a sufficient answer to any such hopes.

The huge Tory majority which followed eight months of Labour Government was a sign of how little that administration had served to arouse in the workers any feeling of class loyalty. The central feature of the political situation now, for the workers, is the threatened attack on the funds of the unions. The spirit of the old Combination Laws actuates a Government which will certainly go as far as it dare. A century after their repeal the old challenge is to be flung down once again to the whole working-class movement. How is that challenge to be answered? On the answer to that, future British working-class history depends.

ELLEN WILKINSON, M.P.

AS OTHERS SEE US

A Russian translation of W. W. Craik's Outline of the History of the Modern British Working-class Movement *was published by the Soviet State Publishing Co., in 1923. The translator, S. Pestkoffsky, contributed a preface, the main part of which is here rendered into English by Eden and Cedar Paul. As a comment by an "outside observer" on British working-class history, it is an appropriate contribution to this special number of* The PLEBS.

W. W. CRAIK'S *Short Outline of the History of the Modern British Working-class Movement* is the only history of that movement penned by a British Marxist. Precisely because it was written, not by a German or a Russian, but by a British Marxist, it exhibits the strength and the weakness of the ideas of a contemporary British Marxist who has taken or is taking an active part in the British trade union movement.

As is well known, there do not yet exist in Great Britain political working-class organisations in which the broad masses of the workers are enrolled. The British Labour Party is not a political organisation. It has not special organisational foundations among the working masses. It is a loose political federation of trade unions and socialist parties, formed for the purpose of sending "labour" representatives to Parliament. . . .

Besides the Labour Party, there exist the Independent Labour Party and the Communist Party. Although both of these are political organisations (their membership being composed of persons who share a particular political outlook), neither one nor the other has enrolled the masses in its ranks. They consist of advanced groups of workers more or less completely segregated from the masses, so that, for instance, they can exert little influence upon the industrial struggle of the labouring masses.

Under these conditions the struggle of the workers for the overthrow of capitalism must naturally secure expression through the trade unions, since these organisations do, in fact, enrol the labouring masses. The interest of Craik's book lies in its attempt to show the ways and means by which the British trade unions can be induced to participate in the struggle for the liberation of the working class as a whole.

To this end, the author advocates the re-organisation of the British trade unions (most of which are at present built upon a craft basis) into industrial unions. A Russian reader unacquainted with the history of the British working-class movement will be amazed to find that in such a country as Britain, a land of advanced capitalist development, it is still necessary to proclaim that industrial unions are preferable to craft unions. Can it really be necessary, he will ask, in a country where the trade union movement is more than a hundred years old, to take so much pains to prove what is already taken for granted by the workers in Germany, Austria, Russia, Poland, and the Balkan States?

Unfortunately this is so! Precisely because Britain was the first country in which trade unions came into existence, precisely because craft unions have existed there for more than a century and a half, they continue to exist there to-day. These craft unions have a long history, and possess ancient traditions; they have accumulated large funds; and although, as the author shows, they fail to defend the interests of the workers in the struggle against the capitalists, none the less they provide material advantages for their members, furnishing them with insurance and various other benefits.

The craft unions make no claim to achieve the organisation of the working masses as a whole. . . . for their only desire is to secure the maximum of material advantages for their own members. . . .

Down to the year 1880, craft unions of this kind were almost exclusively dominant in Britain. Their overwhelming influence among the British workers was due to the fact that at this epoch British industry and commerce possessed a practical monopoly of the world market. . . . Consequently, British capitalists were sure of making high profits, and therefore did not endeavour to exploit the working classes mercilessly by lowering wages, increasing the hours of labour, and so on. But towards the year 1880, Britain began to be faced by rivals in the world market; first of all by Germany and the United States; and subsequently by Japan and even by Russia.

British capitalists now began to find it impossible to make as large profits as usual. They therefore tried to compensate themselves by a more effective exploitation of the wage-earners. There now began an attack upon wages, the standard working day, trade union rights, and so on. The British workers were shaken out of their long sleep. Towards 1890 there came a revival of the strike movement among the workers of various industries. Between

1900 and 1914, this movement became widespread and was greatly intensified. But the majority of the unions, since they were organised upon a craft basis, and had been accustomed for decades to devote all their energies and funds to promoting a petty-bourgeois system of mutual aid, showed themselves antagonistic to strikes—or at least the executives assumed this hostile attitude. Most of the strikes, therefore, had an impulsive character. . . .

This fact led many of the workers to fight for the re-organisation of the unions. The struggle assumed two different forms. In the first place, various " new " unions were constituted out of those workers who had not hitherto been enrolled in trade unions (the dockers, the lower grades of railway servants, mine workers, and so on). . . . In the second place, many of the old craft unions, becoming aware of their own weakness, began to form federations in order to fight the employing class by joint efforts within a whole domain of production.

Thus, after long travail, was born in Britain the movement for the creation of " class-conscious " trade unions.

But this movement continues to encounter stubborn resistance, not only from the side of the capitalists, but also from the side of conservative minded members of the working class. . . .

THE FACTS ABOUT HOUSING

RAW MATERIAL FOR LABOUR SPEAKERS

THIS article, it should be explained, is hardly an article at all. My aim is merely to lay before PLEBS readers the actual essential facts about housing, without frills or adornments of any kind. That anything very new is likely to result from this is doubtful, but housing is going again to become a suddenly acute problem as soon as the Tory ministry gets going.

We shall find, in the first place, that it is not true to think that it is a war-time arrear of housing that it is necessary to make up. It is a growing failure of capitalism to house the people that we are faced with, a failure that began before the war. Secondly, that the reasons for this failure are to be found on the masters' side, not the workers'.

Let us first consider the relation of population to housing—that is to say, what is called " housing needs."* In the first place, here is a list of the Acts which have permitted communal intervention

* I should say at once I am indebted for many of these figures to Major Barnes' *Housing*, a large book replete with valuable information and somewhat less valuable conclusions.

in housing, despite the dislike of capitalism for any such proceeding. The Wheatley scheme, which is not yet fully operative, is omitted. We shall deal more with the two housing schemes later.

Housing: Summary of Parliamentary Action

1851 Shaftesbury Act: Required local authorities to see to the provision of lodging houses for the working class.

1868 Torrens Act: Required local authorities to see to the demolition or repair of unfit houses.

1875 Cross Act: Gave local authorities the power to "replace"—i.e., build new houses to replace old.

1885 and 1890 Acts: Codifying and re-affirming these provisions.

1909 Finance Act: Empowered local authorities to undertake extensive building and town planning schemes.

1919 Addison Scheme (of which more later): Compelled local authorities to draw up housing schemes and submit them to the Ministry of Health.

1923 Chamberlain Scheme, of which more later.

Before the war the ratio of municipally built houses to privately built was only 5 to 95. No later figures exist. Consequently, until quite recently, the problem of house building was a problem approached on strictly orthodox capitalist lines. There are records of the amount of houses built from 1801 to 1911, and they show that capitalism was already failing. In the period between 1801 and 1841, houses—of a kind—were built freely. This was the first boom of English capitalism, its period of greatest expansion. Never since then have the figures of house building, up to 1914, reached a satisfactory figure.

House Building before the War

I. 1801—1841. Boom period. Building rises to 188 houses per 1000 existing and never falls below 138 per 1000.

II. 1841—1891. Decline. Building never rises above 140 per 1000 and falls to 116 per 1000.

III. 1891—1911. Slight recovery. Average of 149 per 1000. But the figures 1911 to 1914 (so far as available) indicate a renewed fall.

The intervention of state schemes since the war complicates later figures. We shall return to that point later. Meanwhile, the following table is of value. It is to be noted that all these tables, compiled from official sources, are incomplete in important particulars—unlike, for example, what obtains in America. One wonders whether it is incompetence, or whether British capitalism is genuinely afraid of knowing the truth.

Total Number of Houses

(From Inhabited House Duty returns; no figures since 1915 collected):

1891—1892	5,973,625
1901—1902	6,800,986
1909—1910	7,875,497
1910—1911	7,911,654
1911—1912	8,004,189
1912—1913	8,064,218
1913—1914	8,122,898
1914—1915	8,192,990

So far, so good. Now let us turn to the parallel figures of population—of the needs of housing. These figures will remain incomplete. In several of the most important instances I have failed to find any Scotch figures of recent date.

Population:	Increase, England and Wales only	
	1901	32,527,843
	1911	36,070,492
	1921	37,885,242

A more reliable index, however, is obviously the number of marriages, indicating increase in accommodation necessary.

Marriages		
	1891—1901	2,394,105
	1901—1911	2,640,515
	1911—1921	3,075,903

What is the meaning of these figures? What is the actual lack of housing that is not being met? No one can answer this question. Its answer depends upon the writer's estimate of the "needs" of people in the matter of housing. Some estimate these needs so low that their standard appears to be: "Anything is good enough that does not threaten an immediate epidemic." If we take the human standard of *one house per family*, we find that never has capitalism reached that standard. On that basis even in 1801 there were 320,000 families unprovided for and 1,500,000 persons. In 1911 this had risen to 860,000 and 3,900,000 respectively.

To get at the facts concerning 1911—1921 is more difficult, owing to the absence of census figures.

To calculate the average need of houses in this decade (1911—1921) Major Barnes takes a combination of four figures: growth of population (840,000 houses); growth of families (840,000); number of marriages (892,000); average rate of house building (892,000). This gives the following result:

Average need	866,000
Actual building	357,000
Deficit 1911—1921	509,000

The division of this is probably roughly:

Middle-class Houses	125,000
Working-class Houses	375,000

During the war period no more than 24,000 houses (a maximum figure) were built. The deficit of 509,000 is, of course, in addition to the shortage previously recorded. It would give a total figure of 1,369,000.

The most optimistic figure was naturally produced by Mr. Lloyd George's government in 1919. The official inquiry then made—for what it is worth—gave the estimated housing shortage as 852,375 for England and Wales. It failed to produce any Scotch figures; but a proportional allowance of 75,000 would hardly be called excessive. This gives a total figure of 927,375, which is monstrous enough, but is probably far too low.

Major Barnes, a Liberal and anti-socialist, puts the need as follows:

Pre-war arrears	800,000 houses
War arrears	500,000 houses
Total..	1,300,000 houses

The estimated needs of the present decade, 1921—1931, exclusive of these arrears, will be as follows:

Normal increase	970,000
Replacements of old houses ..	300,000
	1,270,000

How far is this being met? The actual houses built between December, 1921, and June, 1922, were 99,900. This gives, over ten years at the same rate:

750,000

The *additional* deficit (without the Wheatley scheme) would thus be in 1931:

520,000 houses.

That is to say: Capitalist building is not merely not catching up the arrears of the war, it is not merely not keeping things at their present bad level, it is positively worsening the housing conditions every year.

There remain two questions on which we can desire information: (1) Upon whom fall the effects of this shortage, and what are the effects? (2) What attempts have been made by the capitalist state, and with what success, to better matters?

Upon this first question there are few figures. Everyone knows it is the working class that suffers, except in so far as it may be termed suffering for the middle class to be forced (as Mr. Chamberlain lamented in November) to occupy houses not intended for them, but for their inferiors. But there are extant certain pre-war statistics which show the effects of this congestion. Here are three examples:

Report of Croydon (London Area) Medical Officer for 1908: Extract.—"Generally speaking, a tenement of six rooms and over has been considered a large house. It is then found that during 1908 there were 1113 births in large houses, of those 49 only died, a rate of 44 per 1000; as compared with 2884 births with 349 deaths in small houses, a rate of 121 per 1000."

Bradford (Yorks) Infantile Mortality Rates, 1911

In houses of rateable value of	£6 and under,	163 per 1000
" " " "	£6 to £8,	128 "
" " " "	£8 to £12,	123 "
" " " "	Over £12,	88 "

Wigan (Lancs) Infantile Death Rates by Wards, 1913—1914 (per 1000):

(1) St. George: 232.0.
Description: Nearly all poor property, some overcrowding in houses, many Irish: squalor.

(2) Lindsay: 151.7.
Description: Four-fifths of the property is cottage dwellings of good type and many of them of recent erection; not crowded on area; on high ground and having plenty of air space. One-fifth is property of slum type in courts.

(4) St. Thomas: 237.7.
Description: Low lying and houses crowded on area. Practically the whole of the ward is poor property; full of old courts, some back to back, poverty among tenants.

(6) All Saints: 77.9.
Description: On rising ground, better class industrial population, shopkeepers and private residents; much new property; houses not congested on area.

Somehow, it seems wiser to live in All Saints' than St. George's! I will go on to give a brief outline of the two previous State Housing schemes. I do not touch the Wheatley scheme, for these reasons: Because I have not room, because it is not yet operative, because PLEBS readers are aware of its main provisions. PLEBS readers will hardly need to be reminded that, in Mr. Wheatley's words, it is "not a socialist scheme."

Previous Schemes

I. *Addison Scheme*, 1919. Directed by Dr. C. Addison, Minister of Health in Lloyd George's Coalition Government. He resigned and joined the Labour party after the scheme was shut down in the middle of 1922.

Houses built under his direction up to December, 1921, 102,369; houses sanctioned or built when scheme closed, 176,000.

Outline of Scheme.—The State bore the cost of housing, through the local authorities, who were forced to submit schemes. Local authorities could not be required to pay more than the product of 1d. rate in the district. A good standard of house was to be erected.

Reasons for Failure.—(1) The local authorities used mainly the capitalist builder, who was found to be organised in strict rings. Prices were at once doubled and the money went merely into building trusts' pockets. The number of houses built was less than one-fifth of the estimate, and they could not be let at working-class rents at all. The cost of an "Addison" house was £1000; when the housing scheme was shut down it fell in a few months to £500 ; (2) in 1922 the business interests of the country claimed that the revival of trade was being prevented by excessive taxation. Sir Eric Geddes was appointed [" Geddes' Axe "] to cut off all " unnecessary " expense. The housing scheme was among those cut out.

The Wheatley scheme, it will be remembered, consists of two bills, one for Housing and one for Prevention of Profiteering. No wonder ! But the present Government will probably drop the Prevention of Profiteering provisions, and no doubt the consequences will be held up to us as " the failure of the Wheatley scheme " !

II. *Chamberlain Scheme*, 1923. Directed by Mr. Neville Chamberlain in the Bonar Law and Baldwin Conservative governments.

Summary of Scheme.—A subvention of £6 annually was to be made per house for twenty years to the local authorities. Local authorities could not build houses themselves except by permission of the Minister of Health, but must use the private builder. The character of house was not high, viz. :

" (*a*) A two-storied house with a minimum of 570 and a maximum of 950 superficial feet ; or

" (*b*) A flat or one-storied house with a minimum of 500 and a maximum of 800 superficial feet."

The Minister is empowered to override any by-laws not permitting the erection of low-class houses.

Figures of Buildings to May 14th, 1924

Local Authorities involved	1,260
Houses to be built by Local Authorities ..	46,153
Houses to be built by Private Enterprise ..	89,507
House Total	135,600

That is to say, having regard to the size of the problem, the results were ludicrous. They were ludicrous because the use of capitalist firms drove up prices so that house-building became " uneconomical," indeed, prohibitive in price. The use of direct labour—the employment of labour directly by municipalities—was rare, but there are certain figures of capitalist tenders and direct labour costs under the Addison scheme, per house.

	Capitalist Tender.	Direct Labour Cost.
Newmarket ..	£1,040	£761
Bradford	£1,004	£959
Tonbridge ..	£1,070	£876
	£979	£784

The exact amount of the influence of " rings " upon prices, their extent and influence, is uncertain and much disputed. The *published* information upon the control of materials and shortage of materials is as follows :

Materials, Shortage of.

The War Committee of Inquiry, November, 1918, reported :

Grave shortage of bricks, many yards closed ; no shortage of stone or cement ; very grave shortage of timber, which mostly came from Russia.

Materials, Control of.

Report of Sub-committee on Building Materials to the Standing Committee of the House of Commons on the Investigation of Prices and Trusts : summary.

The Committee found that :

(1) Brickmakers had numerous selling associations.
(2) In drainpipes there were also several associations which divided up England and Wales and fixed prices.
(3) In the timber trade a union was contemplated.
(4) The cement trade was 90 per cent. controlled by the Cement Makers' Federation.
(5) Greystone lime was completely controlled by a Federation.
(6) Light castings were 95 per cent. controlled by a combination.
(7) Cast-iron pipes : practically absolute control by a combination.

The effect of this natural and normal development of capitalism upon prices has been startling—to the wretched man who wants a house. The following figures show that, and also explode the story that high wages are responsible.

Building Materials : Percentage price (1923) on 1914, the latter being taken as 100

Bricks, best stocks	228
Stourbridge firebricks	327
Portland cement	157
Brown Portland stone	187
Wood, 3 in. by 11 in.	226
Wood, 1 in. boards	175
Pipe lead in coils	155
English sheet glass	200
Bangor slates	197

Relative percentage costs of Labour and Material in the erection of a cottage (Barnes' *Housing*, p. 397—8)

	Labour.	Material.
1901	40	60
1923	41	59

Distribution of costs of a £375 house, 1923 (commercial)

	£	s.	d.	Percentage.
Land..	25	0	0	6.6
Roads and Sewers.. ..	50	0	0	13.4
Materials	150	0	0	40.2
Labour	100	0	0	26.4
Other Charges	12	10	0	3.4
Profit	37	10	0	10.0
	£375	0	0	

It is thus clear that the fault does not lie in high wages: it lies in the nature of capitalist business. One, and one only, argument advanced by the employers has some basis. It is probable that the ranks of the operatives are few and more workers are needed. The unemployment figures appear to give the lie to this, but do not upon close inspection. A phenomenal decrease in the number of operative builders has taken place since 1901, as follows:

Skilled men employed in Building and Construction (England and Wales)

In 1901	720,229
In 1911	646,939
In July, 1914	423,518
In January, 1920	324,815
In July, 1920	365,596

The percentage of unskilled to skilled men remains fairly stationary between 67 and 69 [to 100]. Hence:

	Skilled.	Total.
In January, 1922 ..	393,390	668,763
In July, 1922	393,390	668,763
In February, 1923 ..	368,220	625,400

At first sight there appears, nevertheless, to be much unemployment of skilled men. The following figures are given:

July, 1922	34,617
February, 1923	58,659

But in the first case 61.7 per cent. were carpenters and painters, and only 8.2 per cent. masons and plasterers. In the second 70.7 and 7.8 respectively. So the apparent abundance of labour confined to certain crafts. Apprenticeship has disappeared in masonry, and is disappearing in bricklaying. There is an actual shortage of labour the moment any large building scheme begins, but pure capitalist building cannot quite absorb the existing supply of labour.

Major Barnes' estimate of needed increase in operatives is 300,000, incidentally.

There are further matters not dealt with in this article. One is the operatives' organisation, which is dealt with in my *Builders' History*, while the latest figures are given in the 1924 Labour Year Book. Another is the Building Guild, on which I prefer to express no opinion. There are also the Rent Restrictions Acts, for which I have no space, nor for a description of American mass methods, nor for an inquiry into the material sources of the building trade, etc.

RAYMOND W. POSTGATE.

AMERICAN MINERS set to work to find out *WHY*

TEN thousand miners in the fifth sub-district of Illinois, United Mine Workers of America, have launched a significant experiment in Labour Education. Although more than half of the mines in this territory are closed for lack of demand, these union men, in the face of a hard winter, have reached the conclusion that their real hope lies in awakening the rank and file of the organisation to the underlying and economic causes of the hardship that is confronting them. They therefore propose to combat ignorance and apathy with organised education.

The Sub-District Convention, held early in June, 1924, resolved to adopt this course after listening to a report from President William Daech, in which he suggested the formation of an educational committee and the adoption of a vigorous policy of education for the rank and file. A committee of five was elected from the floor of this convention, a former mine worker—Tom Tippett—was secured as director of the experiment, and in the blazing heat of an Illinois August the educational work was begun.

Discouragements piled up.

"No one will come in the summer," argued one critic.

"Miners don't want education; they are content with white mule and the movies," complained another.

The committee and the officers persisted, and now, at the end of three months, there are more than 180 students, grouped in ten classes, and well scattered over the district.

After a great deal of discussion, the students decided to spend the first three months on ancient history, supplemented by English and public speaking. The next period will be devoted to American history, with particular reference to the history of the American labour movement. Most of these students never finished the grammar school; some of them went to work when they were twelve years of age; but they assemble, week after week, discuss the topic of the evening, bring in compositions, do outside work in the public libraries—in short, they act quite like other folks that are interested to enlarge the boundaries of their knowledge.

Labour education comes as something of an innovation in these Illinois mining towns, in which the saloon and the movie palace have heretofore predominated. The schools in this section are usually conducted by quite young girls, whose education has extended little beyond the high school, and whose background is that of the Illinois mining villages. There are few forms of recreation and almost no means of spreading enlightenment. The action of the union in setting up the machinery for labour education introduces an intellectual interest which has had no counterpart since the days when the socialists were broadcasting their literature among the miners. But between the two cases there is this essential difference: the socialists were always a minority among the miners, whereas the present educational programme was adopted by the recent Convention without a dissenting vote.

Questions are being asked of the educational committee and of the officers: Is this scheme working? How far do you propose to go? Those in charge of the work have no set answer. Thus far there has been an unprecedented interest in the classes. Beginning with their October pro-

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AN APOLOGY

The fourth and concluding instalment of Dr. James Johnston's series of articles on "The Method of Science" is unavoidably held over till next month.

gramme, the educational committee expects, in addition to the regular classes, to bring into the district, at intervals of about four weeks, prominent teachers in various fields related to the class work, who will not only conduct classes, but will hold public lectures in the mining villages where the classes have been organised. The work of these outsiders in the classes will bring the miners into touch with the methods and ideas of men and women who have made a mark in the world. The public lectures will spread the work of education to the whole village.

Thus far the entire cost of the educational work has been borne by the sub-district treasury. The classes, local autonomous groups, decide their educational programme with the assistance of the educational committee and the officers. There seems to be no limit to the work which this educational committee may do except that set by the funds of the union and the interest and capacity of the students, most of whom are under thirty, and all of whom are looking for a way out of the tangled maze of economic vassalage in which the miners of Illinois now find themselves.

SCOTT NEARING.

REVIEWS

A WELSHMAN LOOKS AT THE WELSH

The Industrial Revolution in South Wales. By Ness Edwards (Labour Publishing Co., 2s. 6d. Postpaid from PLEBS, 2s. 8d.).

NESS EDWARDS has set an excellent example to students passing through our local classes. With no prior training in a highly specialised field of historical research, he has extracted some of the most telling passages from contemporary journals and government reports bearing on the Industrial Revolution in Wales, fitting them into the pattern of the hideous pavement of Welsh industrialism like the stones of a mosaic.

He has done something more. He has laid the foundations of an N.C.L.C. school of research into the conditions of life and work in Great Britain. Would that in the near future we might have a similar sketch of the historical development of each of the great industrial districts.

His chapters on the early strikes and on the Chartist struggles open up to us new vistas, and show us these not so much as great sweeping currents of historic forces and vast class conflicts, but as they appeared to the men who took part in them.

Here is no university-trained scholar looking out of his college window or bringing back from the coalfield his specimens and duly exhibiting them. Here is a working miner himself writing of his own people. Knowing as I do the exclusive spirit of these valley dwellers, the group-consciousness of each mining village (with its local medicine man either from or on his way to Penywern Road) and the pugnacity of the young bulls of the Rhondda, I sincerely hope that Ness will not be put through it after the manner of Caradoc Evans for writing in another sphere of another aspect of Welsh popular life !

Anyone who wants to understand the Welsh " boys " who pioneered the College movement to so great an extent, and led some of us " highbrows " out of the mental wilderness wherein we were wandering, must buy, read and re-read, Ness Edwards' book.

J. T. WALTON NEWBOLD.

" FREE " LABOURERS

The Theatre : An Art and an Industry. By H. R. Barbor (Labour Publishing Co. Price 1s., cloth 2s. 6d.).

It is a significant fact that the opponents of the Actors' Association number all the really successful members of the theatrical profession. The Stage Guild is full of " artists " who are afraid that any form of combination, especially a trade union form, will be " in restraint of art." Their souls must be free for their work, their managers must be free for their business, and things must go on as they have always done.

We never knew what artistic people they were before. When we have seen them earning their daily bread in one commercial play after another, we never realised it. Neither, I suspect, did they. Strange that the Sir Gerald du Mauriers of the theatre do not rush to help in special shows, or put up literary plays with no box office appeal. But, brave fellows, presumably they have been repressing all their artistic feelings so that they could come forward with extra strength when this dispute called them.

The staunch adherents of the A.A. are the small part people, the chorus girls, the hard working provincials, the walkers-on, all the rank and file of the industry who struggle and sweat and starve to make a living out of it. So far they have not found that a living wage would damage them artistically, nor that the A.A.'s war against bogus managers is adversely affecting their interpretation of *Hamlet*. But then they are simple souls, believing in old-fashioned slogans like "Unity is strength" and "An injury to one. . . ."

The pros and cons of the quarrel are ably set out in Mr. Barbor's little book. His only trouble has been to find the "*cons*" for the advocates of high thinking, commercial plays, and let the weakest go to the wall. They will have to write their own apologia. Honest minds cannot do them justice. A ruler cannot measure a corkscrew.

MONICA EWER.

SCHOOLBOOKS

Short Stories of To-day. Selected by J. W. Marriot (Harrap, 2s. 6d.).

Readings from Great Historians. Vol. III.: British History, 1714—1856. R. L. Mackie (Harrap, 3s.).

The publications of Messrs. Harrap are of an unequal character. The first of the books here seems to have no educational value. The comments prefixed to each short story are banal at the best, and the literary taste of the commentator is not impeccable. The examination papers at the end are infuriating. Viewed, however, merely as a collection of short stories, rather on the sentimental side, the book is well worth having—indeed, unusually good and will provide a couple of pleasant lazy evenings.

Mr. Mackie's book is more valuable. It supplements our usual dull reading by extracts from famous historians, new and old—Thackeray, Macaulay, and Southey, Parkman, Green and Strachey. Some of the extracts are too short—mere purple patches—some exceedingly interesting, especially those on the social changes on England.

But what is most significant, since these are schoolbooks, is that an absolute majority of the extracts deal with military glory, imperialism and war. And these extracts do not show the horrors of war for the most part. True, we are told:

"The snow lies thick in Valley Forge,
The ice on the Delaware;
But the poor dead soldiers of King George
They neither know nor care.
They will not stir when the drifts are gone,
Or the ice melts out in the bay;
And the men that served with Washington
Lie all as still as they."

But what can a few lines here or there do against Macaulay on Plassey, Napier on Sir John Moore, Southey on Trafalgar, Trevelyan on Saratoga, Kinglake on the Light Brigade, Fortescue on Waterloo, Parkman on Wolfe, Scott on Prestonpans, and all the Jacobite record under the pathetic lines of Burns:

"Now a' is done that men can do,
And a' is done in vain."

There are many forms of militarist propaganda; this is not the least dangerous.

R. W. P.

TOLLER

The Swallow-Book. By Ernst Toller (Humphrey Milford, 2s. 6d.).

Ashley Dukes' English version of Toller's free-verse poem, *Das Schwalbenbuch*, written in 1923, in the fortress of Niederschönenfeld, where he was finishing a five years' sentence for his part in the Bavarian revolt of 1919. The book's inspiration is sufficiently explained by the Author's Dedication, which reads: "*In my cell two swallows nested in the year* 1922." Like *Masses and Man*, this work does not lend itself to quotation; the effect achieved is a cumulative one, and to reprint any particular passage would be unfair. Naturally enough there is little of sociological import to be found in it; the artist momentarily transcends the revolutionist. Toller here achieves solidarity with his brother poets in a *super*-social vision of the beauty and tragedy of all living. He sings (in the words of a British contemporary) " That the life of all creatures is brave and pityful."

The poem passes at least one of the tests of great poetry: familiarity breeds increasing respect. Especially delightful—in its context—is the little Rabelaisian description, on page 38, of how the swallow fledgling did *not* dirty his own nest.

E. J.

" MUNSENMUNSE "

Speak Out. By Alexander Watson (Harrap & Co., 2s. 6d. net.).

Joining in Public Discussion. By A. D. Sheffield (D. H. Doran Co., New York).

HERE are two of the many books that are offered to those who wish to speak in public, or to those who desire to improve their speaking capacity. The first is published in the ordinary way; the second is published as No. 1 of the series of textbooks being issued by the Workers' Educational Bureau of the United States of America.

The ideal book on Public Speaking has never been written, and probably never will be written. A great many people imagine that public speaking is as easy as gossiping over a cup of tea, while others who have spoken a fair amount have very often no idea of how vastly their speaking capacity might be improved if they devoted sufficient skilled care and attention to it.

Of the two books, *Speak Out*, although it does not cover such a wide field as its neighbour, is possibly the more useful. In view of the fact that the other book is published by the Workers' Educational Movement in the United States, it would have been preferable from the reviewer's point of view to have recommended the W.E.B. publication. It is certainly more comprehensive than *Speak Out*, but it is inclined to be stodgy. The difference between the two books is really indicated by the difference in their titles; the one gets brightly to the point, the other gets there by a detour.

Public speaking is a subject that is apt to be neglected in our movement to an extent that is quite undeserved. The General Election which has just passed not only served to indicate the enormous importance of the public speaker, particularly to the Labour Movement, but has demonstrated in countless numbers of cases the tremendous improvement that could be made in our public speaking.

We are all familiar with the speaker who never bears in mind that different audiences require to be approached in different ways. This sort of speaker begins his speech to an astounded audience of business men by addressing them as " Fellow workers ! " On the other hand, there are all the faults of poor tone, wrong pitch and bad articulation—to mention some of the many flaws that are very obvious amongst speakers. Who, for instance, has not heard the speaker who says " Munsenmunse " when he actually means " months and months ? "

It is to assist our people to make the fullest and most effective use of the speaker's power that the N.C.L.C. has recently arranged a Correspondence Course on the subject.

J. P. M. M.

EMPIRE AND RACE PROBLEMS

The Book of Empire. Prof. J. R. Ainsworth Davis (Education Pub. Co., 11d.).

Historical Geography of Britain and British Empire, Books I. & II. T. Franklin (1s. 6d. each. W. and A. K. Johnston, Ltd.).

Edina Junior Histories, Books I.—VI. A. L. Westlake & T. Franklin (9d. each).

The Growth of Empire. P. H. & A. C. Kerr (Longmans, Green & Co., 3s. 6d.).

History of the British Empire. C. S. S. Higham (Longmans, Green & Co., 5s.).

Christianity and the Race Problem. J. H. Oldham (Student Christian Movement, 7s. 6d.).

Parents should watch the mental food given to their children more closely than ever nowadays. An emetic will quickly rid the stomach of poisoned physical food, but the danger of perverted history is much more difficult to remove. The problem of changing our school books can only be neglected at our peril. All but the last of the above have been written for use in schools, and all but the set of histories are special attempts on the part of private enterprise—the only agency still for publishing schoolbooks—to take advantage of the publicity now being given to Empire.

Common to them all is a naïve rejoicing in "our" Empire of free peoples. The text is appropriate to those classrooms we know too well, with their *Daily Mail* War Album portraits and their reproduction of battle scenes. In Australia they made a bonfire of the old history readers, and material deserving of the flames is not lacking in Britain.

The publishers of the first book begin even in the nursery and infant schools to give to the kiddies "a full appreciation of the privileges they enjoy as members of the great motherland." Prof. Ainsworth Davis, aided by photographs, writes up a trip around the "brotherhood of nations" for the school children who cannot visit Wembley and apparently reconciles Empire and the League of Nations. Messrs. Westlake and Franklin are somewhat engrossed in "drum and trumpet history," but do not remain in the usual nationalist corridor—they commendably endeavour to show why the invaders butted in. But there is no attempt to dig deeply into the causes of change, e.g., indulgences and other abuses of the Church are given as the reason for the revolt of Luther and interrupted pilgrimages are supposed to have caused the Crusades. In Book VI. a relatively large place is given to the Chartist and Trade Union Movements. After relating how the British Empire seized huge areas of the earth, the authors, having indicted Germany as the aggressor, rejoice that "justice and liberty triumphed in the Great War."

The geography sections are the best in the two next books, and these throw a great deal of light upon how the geography of England influenced early history. But, instead of showing the economic interdependence of the world, these books are confessedly a "judicious selection of facts" to explain how Britishers were "gradually fitted" for the task of Empire builders and controllers. The history sections are not without blemish, for it is not true to say that Chartist riots wrecked Birmingham and Newport (page 9). The closing chapters have much to say about the All Red Route and the need for defending "our" Empire by war. Forgetting that the whole earth is subject to the same shrinking process, the author suggests that wireless telephony will make possible the linking together into an effective political unity of the widely scattered and distant parts of the British Empire.

P. H. and C. Kerr repeat the same story, but their book has some fine illustrations of Kitchener and Haig. Mr. Higham's book is for older students; he gives the facts more fully and with much less didactic purpose, and his work will be useful for reference for the forthcoming Plebs brochure on Empire and in recalling the main incidents in "the civilising mission" of Britain.

All the previous treatments of Empire begin from a more or less Imperialist point of view, but, as his title indicates,

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Mr. Oldham has another way of approach. Strange as it may seem, Marxian and Christian agree in viewing the human race as one. Those who gloat over Empire and call our kiddies to prepare for war are the blindest of fools in comparison with the author of this book, who faces the reality that the surge of European expansion has covered the world, that the coloured peoples—two and a half times numerically superior—are beginning to reject this white domination and the potential conflict—making all the past wars seem like mere family quarrels—is an imminent menace to the world. He examines the problem carefully from the historical, biological, economic, political and ethical point of view, and he draws largely from his own experience in those areas where the white and coloured peoples meet.

It is not generally known that already books have been written appealing to the Nordic race to scrap phantom internationalism and "reassert the pride of race and the right of merit to rule"; and to change the exploitation of the white workers into one of the coloured peoples only. The racial Bernhardis and Blatchfords are on the increase. Biologists have discovered the white man's superior "germ plasm" and many scientists, with their intelligence tests, provide convenient theories to justify his rule.

There is much in Mr. Oldham's book which will have no appeal to Plebeians. He ignores entirely the changes introduced by Soviet Russia in her dealings with the nationalities of the Middle East. But his treatment of the problems of immigration, population and intermarriage deserves serious consideration. And he shows the impossibility of using any intelligence test which will be fair to various groups and races and effectively criticises the racial biologists. Oddly enough, while being alive to many cases of the economic basis of racial antagonisms, he ignores the profits made by Britishers out of India as an influence for continuing its domination.

Those of us dedicated to the great end of workers' emancipation will find Mr. Oldham's information useful even if his solutions are tame and ineffective.

M. S.

UNDER-CONSUMPTION AGAIN

The Unclaimed Wealth. By H. Abbati (Allen and Unwin, pp. 190. 6s.).

Mr. Hobson, in his introduction to this book, seems to regard it as filling a gap in his under-consumption theory of the trade-cycle. In fact, it does nothing of the sort. The real gap in Mr. Hobson's theory still yawns open: this writer has succeeded only in unloading more stones on a part of the road already well enough distinguished. But worker-students are keenly interested in the economics of unemployment, and in the valuable controversy between the adherents of the under-consumption theory and those who maintain the point of view of The PLEBS *Outline of Economics.*

The under-consumption theory, they will remember, ascribes the trade-cycle to the tendency of production under capitalism to outrun consumption, owing to the unequal distribution of incomes within the community and the practice followed by the wealthy of re-investing their surplus profits in the constructional industries, thus piling up productive power, while the effective demand of the mass of consumers (i.e., wage-earners) lags far behind. The criticism levelled against this statement is that in fact re-investments are always employed in further production, in the course of which incomes are created fully adequate to absorb the additional goods and services. Mr. Abbati counters this by asserting that much of the surplus income of the employing classes lies idle as bank deposits for sufficiently long to enable production to run on ahead of effective demand.

"The total continuous purchasing-power or income arising from, or *earned* by, production can only be *utilised* provided it is *all spent* on commodities and services as fast as it is *earned* or received." (Author's italics.) He maintains that the capitalist class in practice don't spend or re-invest at once, but allow much of their wealth to stagnate in banks, thus causing a hiatus in effective demand which brings the economic machine to a stop. The author nowhere adduces any statistics, or indeed any arguments, to support this statement. He doesn't inquire what the banker does with deposits, nor does he ask himself *when* this non-utilisation of purchasing power takes place. It occurs, of course, when the peak of the boom has been passed and the slump has already overtaken capitalist industry. We all know that investors hang back when prices are falling and profits disappearing. The crucial question has not been answered: Why do over-production and deflation originally take place?

Mr. Abbati entirely ignores the three chief aspects of the trade cycle: (1) the changes that occur in the general price level, (2) the maldistribution of investments between the constructional and the final industries, and (3) the important *time-element* in the progress of effective demand, namely, the way in which wages lag behind profits and behind the cost of living. The index of *price* is what we must follow.

The adherents of the under-consumption theory, therefore, have little to thank Mr. Abbati for. His remedies, which are concealed below a cloud of obscurantist stuff about consumers' and producers' surplus (at which Marshallian economists will gape), are miles behind those of Mr. Hobson and the reformist socialists among his following. He looks forward to a *regime* of purified *laissez-faire*, where the workers will receive their rightful share of surplus and effective demand will march hand in hand with productive power. Mr. Abbati seems to be a "practical business man," well-meaning and enthusiastic over his theory (of which he has been granted exclusive revelation), and possessed of a vigorous though often diffuse and rhetorical style.

Against one thing I must record an emphatic protest. Mr. Abbati's passion for italics would make water the mouth of Mr. Lovat Fraser. At least a third of the book is written thus, including the whole of the serious argument. This indiscriminate use of italics is an unmitigated nuisance. On page 76 the word "cash" is spelt in italics no less than fourteen times, so that the eye is dragged from one *cash* to another right down the page, and it becomes impossible to follow the argument. Nor does the printer (pawky fellow!) assist by describing certain securities as "guilt-edged" (p. 86).

There are, however, some surprisingly good bits in the book. Chapters IV.—VIII. contain the best account I have seen of the influence of the Bank of England in the money market, and of the manufacture of credit. The author is an economic innocent and a liberal, but worker-students will forgive him a lot for his practical knowledge of the mechanism of finance and the money market.

J. L. G.

THE ECONOMICS OF WASTE

The Economic Illusion. By A. Bertram (Parsons, 7s. 6d.).

As Marxians we have rightly concentrated on the primary exploitation of the producer and the creation of surplus value there. This has tended to make us critical and sometimes scornful of those who, as the land taxers did, attacked the receivers of the rent division of S.V., or of those who had marked down the banker as the villain in the plot. It has also diverted our attention from the gross perversion of human labour that increasingly exists in this mad capitalist world. Marx himself, however, was at some pains to show the capitalist transference of workers into luxury trades. And this book will assist us—although it is written by a Christian Socialist until recently in the Liberal Party—to remember that as workers we have to remove not only the Idle Rich and the Unemployed Poor, but also the enormous wasteful production of capitalism. Mr. Bertram speaks specially and with inside knowledge of the part of the commercial class in this. But the engineer making a beautiful car which will wait in a row with its driver outside the night club; the artists condemned to advertise bad whisky and quack medicines; the building trade workers providing villas and hotels for week-end wasters; —they are all familiar to us. The author attacks the waste of advertising, and the "claims" of capital. His chief proposal is for the employment by the State in useful work of all the unemployed. The great illusion to him is that abundance of possessions makes for life. Apart from a misunderstanding of the left wing case against reparations (p. 131), there is little to criticise, and the book could be well placed in the hands of religious friends now on the fence. Those of us who ask, "Who'll bell this cursed capitalist cat?" will find no answer, despite the author's good intentions and his high-priced book.

M. S.

"Wall Street backs Fund to speak for Big Interests in textbooks"

AMERICA'S biggest newspaper noise, Mr. W. R. Hearst, is worried about "pro-British" teaching in American schools and textbooks. In the course of hunting down "influences" of this kind, his sleuths have also accumulated—and the Hearst papers have published—quite a lot of interesting information about the way in which money talks through the medium of school-books. The following quotations are from an article by Chas. Grant Millar which appeared in the Hearst papers under the above heading last October:—

"In the name of 'Americanisation,' 'Constitution interpretations' or 'civics,' the rawest of propaganda in behalf of big business and vested privilege is forced upon our future citizenry through certain new public school textbooks. . . . The National Security League has solicited, in Wall Street alone, a fund of $25,000 a year for use in inspiration of new textbooks and special instructions to teachers. Already Legislatures have been induced to make this teaching compulsory in twenty-three states. . . .

"The exact nature of the inspiration which emanates from Carnegie and Wall Street Funds is clearly revealed. One of the new texts is, *Actual Democracy: The Problems of America*, for high school use. 'Private property,' says this inspired text, 'is one of the fundamental institutions of American democracy. It is an unmistakable index of social progress. It originated because of social reasons; it has grown under continual subjection to the social sanction. It is the basis on which our whole social order has been built up.' 'Show that private property and democracy are inseparable,' is the thesis assigned the pupils at the end of this chapter.

"A most serious menace to democracy, according to this text, is labour unionism. It may be either socialistic, as was the Western Federation of Miners, or anarchistic, like the Industrial Workers of the World. It is class, not trade, conscious, and antagonistic to the wage and other systems of society. . . .

"After some twenty pages of this sort of stuff, the thesis is assigned at the end of the chapter, 'Would a labour party in the United States be un-American?' All of which must prove confusing and confounding, if not convincing, to the millions of children of union men who by virtue of Carnegie and Wall Street funds and by compulsion of law must receive such teachings in the public schools.

"This inspired text teaches that 'our earlier democratic ideals' and 'the spirit of American traditions' have become obsolete and no longer practicable, by reason of non-Nordic immigration which 'has rendered necessary a profound change in the very structure of our government' . . . The school children are taught in this text that there has been much 'growth of radical theories of government, so that to-day American democracy is facing a life-and-death struggle with Marxian socialism.'

"Clearly, the propaganda of the Carnegie Foundation is producing results. *Actual Democracy* is not the only textbook of its class recently issued. Another gives some most fantastic twists to constitutional interpretation, and still another is little more or less than an elaborate piece of laudatory publicity for about a dozen big business concerns. It is apparent that an organised and well-financed movement to mould the mind of our school children into a proper attitude not toward God, but toward Mammon, has been launched."

MARKED PASSAGES

Class War

"This girl I loved with all my soul, for whom I was ready to sacrifice my life, was not good enough to marry young Verrall. And I had only to look at his even handsome characterless face to perceive a creature weaker and no better than myself. She was to be his pleasure until he chose to cast her aside and the poison of our social system had so saturated her nature—his evening dress, his freedom and his money had seemed so fine to her and I so clothed in squalor—that to that prospect she had consented. And to resent the social conventions that created this situation was called 'class envy,' and gently born preachers reproached us for the mildest resentment against an injustice no living man would now either endure or consent to profit by. What was the sense of crying 'peace' when there was no peace? If there was one hope in the disorders of that old world it lay in revolt and conflict to the death."

H. G. Wells, *In the Days of the Comet.*

The Strangle-hold

"The bourgeoisie's weapon is starvation. If, as a writer or an artist you run counter to their narrow notions, they simply and silently withdraw your means of subsistence. I sometimes wonder how many people of talent are executed in this way every year."

R. L. Stevenson (Preface, *Weir of Hermiston*, Tusitala edition).

The Pedant

You make for better or worse
A University your universe;
And so with orthodoxy
You live your life by proxy.
(*New York Herald*).

LETTERS

Concerning Centenaries

Dear Editor,—Although anniversaries are essentially sentimental institutions, nevertheless there is something to be said for them. They remind us that we are heirs of other days, and they enable us to take stock at stated times. And of all anniversaries the centenary attracts most attention. Indeed, of late, we have been suffering from—almost—a centenary mania. Writers, discoveries, movements, have all been having their one or two or three hundredth anniversary, and one hears on every hand of commemorations of different kinds.

Of these varying commemorations I feel drawn most to the Pageant. It is of course true, as objectors will no doubt urge at once, that the Pageant, as we know it, is a suburban notion, and we do, as a matter of fact, associate the word with the vicar in hired armour as King Arthur, his sister in a red wig as Queen Elizabeth, and his daughters in ruffs and hoops representing as many of Bluebeard's eight wives as the family will run to. Nor did the big-scale suburbanism of the Wembley Pageant do anything to increase our respect for the institution.

But abroad the Pageant holds a very different position, and particularly in Russia, where the workers have rapidly evolved the sort of drama they really want and that really helps them. Its broad, simple mass effects, its colour, its dependence on action rather than on words for the conveyance of its meaning; its virtual independence of the professional actor; the scope it gives to the varying gifts of crowds who would ordinarily be mere spectators; its freedom from most of the restraints and conventions of the modern theatre; all these qualities which the Pageant possesses have commended it to the workers. And when the State reinforces the effort with an organisation similar to that which in London can stage the two minutes silence round the Cenotaph or the Military Tattoo at Wembley, the joint effect is indeed impressive and may well be considered by those who realise the possibilities of the centenary of the Labour Movement which is upon us.

In his book, *The New Theatre and Cinema in Soviet Russia*, Mr. Huntly Carter describes a Pageant demonstration on the heroic scale. The taking of the Winter Palace in Petrograd in November, 1917, corresponds to the taking of the Bastille in the story of the French Revolution, and in Russia this act is re-enacted on a scale which brings in troops by the ten thousand, re-awakens once again the guns of the "Aurora," which shelled the palace in 1917, and ends up with a combined rush of actors, soldiers and spectators to the extent of over a hundred thousand through the doors into the courtyards of the palace itself.

In pre-war days in Britain the suffragettes found their "Pageant of Great Women" which they toured round the country, a useful means of propaganda, and more recently the Nonconformists have had a similar success with the Mayflower Pageant. In both cases the greater part of the performers were supplied locally. Now, is it possible to evolve a similar Pageant in connection with the Labour centenary?

Any group might venture at least as far as the production of *tableaux vivants* to represent outstanding local ornational events in the History of Labour, or else to reproduce well-known cartoons, e.g., those of Will Dyson. "Waxworks" like these with a sufficiency of labels, mottoes and inscriptions might well be worth the time and trouble they took. Moreover, they could not possibly be very expensive.

Yours, etc.,

F. J. Adkins.

Buckle and Bury

Dear Comrade,—It seems somewhat regrettable that in The Plebs *What to Read* no allusion whatever is made to Buckle's *History of Civilization in England*. The stimulus that this work provides for the thinking reader as apart from the correctness or otherwise of the arguments and inferences of the author, ought, in my opinion, to have ensured its inclusion. Buckle is on the bookshelves of most advanced thinkers, and from a Russian comrade in Johannesburg I learn that he is well-known and appreciated by worker-students in Russia.

Another book which should in my opinion find a place on every student's shelf is Prof. Bury's *History of Freedom of Thought* (Home University Series). Both works have this great feature in common, that they stimulate mental activity and the craving for intellectual satisfaction. To students like myself whose education is self-acquired, they are invaluable.

I hope one day that the Plebs League will give us a textbook on the Philosophy of History. In my opinion it is badly needed.

Yours fraternally,

Chas. Baker.

Harrismith, S. Africa.

Save us from Metaphysics

Dear Comrade,—If anyone doubts whether "Dietzgen re-stated" is necessary, or whether we want a booklet in The Plebs Sixpenny Series on the way the mind works, etc., let him get a ruler and measure the space wasted in the *New Leader* recently to prove that matter doesn't exist.

Yours fraternally,

M. Arcus.

TOWARDS A YOUTH MOVEMENT

DEAR COMRADE,—Com. Coppock's article raises a question not often discussed in the Trade Union movement. He sees in the creation of special Youth sections inside the existing trade unions the solution to the problem. I disagree entirely; such a step would go far to increase and aggravate the prejudices that exist, and would further increase sectionalism between young and adult workers. It is true that young workers fight a trifle shy of joining the unions, but this is mainly due to the attitude of the adult workers who have not interested themselves in the problems of Youth labour, and have overlooked the very serious implications which arise for adult workers as a result of Youth exploitation.

This state of affairs is not to be remedied by further dividing the workers into different sections which shall be governed by an age limit; the problem is how to unite both sections of workers into an effective fighting unit. Youth labour constitutes an ever present menace to adult standards and conditions. It is obvious then that the organisation of the youth inside the trade unions is a matter of the utmost importance. They should be given full rights and every opportunity utilised to knit the youth and adults in bonds of common struggle. This would mean that branch business would not be merely "a man's affair" but the united responsibility of youth and adults.

Yours fraternally,

JACK COHEN.

NOTES BY THE WAY

What are They Introducing in Your Shop?

THE co-operation of our readers is invited to help us get details of modern labour-saving devices. If these are accompanied by actual figures relating to workers displaced they will be the more valuable. Few know, for example, of the phonetic typewriter which writes direct from dictation at 90 to 100 words a minute. This even leaves the dictaphone behind. Locomotive enginemen will be interested in the Elvin Mechanical Stoker which makes the human stoker unnecessary. The Czechoslovakian railways have adopted a steam shovel for 100 locotenders. It is estimated that a suction pipe will unload in six hours a boat whose unloading by hand would occupy six days. Speaking a year ago Sir H. Bowden said that two years previously in his concern 2,000 people turned out 40,000 bicycles a year, while in 1923 a little over 2,000 people produced 70,000 machines. Our comrades in the textile industry could probably inform us of the loom invention which according to the press last June was going to quadruple the production of cloth by enabling one weaver to attend to 16 looms instead of four.

Esperanto in Labour Circles

The *News Letter* of the International Transport Workers' Federation now regularly features news concerning Esperanto; and the British *Railway Review* begins in January the publication of weekly lessons. . .The President of the N.C.L.C., A. A. Purcell, was interviewed in Moscow by worker Esperantists. . . The Committee of the Educational International set up at Oxford last August has duly invited the opinion of its constituent bodies on the subject of Esperanto and its use.

Why not English?

Our Own Indefatigable Esperantist writes:—Some mechanical Marxists in England rely upon the economic supremacy of Britain and the United States to force the English language into final world usage. Their convenient laziness should not prevent them from pondering over the following facts: 58 per cent. of the world's population live in Asia and only a minority even of Europeans speak English; other nations have insisted and will insist that theirs is the only possible international language, e.g., M. Hanotaux pushing French in the League of Nations; the difficulty of the acquirement of English because of its capricious accent and unphonetic spelling, its rich idiom and irregular grammar.

The might and wealth of the Anglo-Saxon world does not remove the necessity of learning the language of its customers and that is why, for example, Americans are learning Spanish faster than Spanish America is learning English. There is no Marxian law of concentration operating in the world of languages; Ireland, Luxembourg, Turkey, the Balkans, Palestine, and many other places are reviving their languages at the moment.

Meanwhile, technical advances in wireless telephony make world-broadcasting possible. Foreign travel is becoming an ordinary experience. Labour Congresses have still to waste at least two-thirds of the time in translation and more than that proportion of space in their printing.

Language, like other tools, can be improved in such a way as to affect its user, and in the improvement by way of an auxiliary tongue, not only would the effectiveness of Labour organisation be immediately increased, but a positive contribution would be made towards achieving that world outlook appropriate to the existing economic world interdependence. Our Marxists should cease arguing and help in the work.

Mediæval Class Struggles

To tutors who are dealing with the growth of towns and the gild period a book by Prof. Pirenne entitled *Belgian Democracy* should be of great service. In this book the story is told with excellent clarity of the struggle of the Flemish towns against feudal authority, and then later of the class struggle inside the towns when the latter had grown to independence and prosperity. This struggle was a rising of the craftsmen of the towns, led by the weavers, against the economic and political power of the rich wool merchants, organised in their Hanses. In the thirteenth century strikes and riots broke out in the leading Flemish towns, which were suppressed by the Hanse; but in 1302 the struggle broke into armed conflict under the guise of a national war of Flemish liberation against the accursed lily of France; for the rich merchants (the *otiosi* as they were called) had made alliance with the King of France and induced his intervention. The result of the war was a temporary reversion of power to the petit-bourgeois interests (craftsmen and small traders) of the towns; but in the fifteenth century under Philip of Burgundy the Netherlands were united into a national state, the independence of the towns curbed, and men of the new class (the *otiosi*) replaced Churchmen and feudal nobles as ministers and advisers of the Crown. The book should be added to those given in *What to Read*—and underlined.

The NATIONAL COUNCIL of LABOUR COLLEGES

HEAD OFFICE—22 ELM ROW, EDINBURGH

Gen. Sec., J. P. M. Millar (to whom all reports should be sent)

NATIONAL Amalgamated Furnishing Trades' Association.—This Union is balloting in January on an N.C.L.C. Educational Scheme and it is up to our enthusiasts to see the ballot to a successful conclusion.

Transport and General Workers.—The N.C.L.C. is directly participating in the Transport and General Workers Educational Scheme. This Scheme, however, is not of the comprehensive character of that of the A.U.B.T.W. The students will be required to pay their own fees. A few Summer School scholarships will be available and the Union will affiliate to the N.C.L.C. and will make a small grant for organising work. It is possible for the Union's Area Committees, however, to add materially to the finance available for educational work. The extent of this financial support will depend on the success that our Movement has in approaching the Area Committees.

Stirlingshire Miners.—This Union has arranged an Educational Scheme with the Stirling Labour College which provides for free classes for the members.

New Classes.—Where a class after Christmas starts with a new subject this class should be counted a new class and a new register should be used. All College Secretaries who have not already done so are asked to send to Head Office immediately Report Form 1 giving particulars of the classes open in January.

Summer School.—The N.C.L.C. is arranging a Summer School for Whitsuntide when it is hoped to hold the Annual Meeting. The School will last for a week. The A.U.B.T.W. has already agreed to send eleven students. N.C.L.C. students who wish to enrol for the School should write Head Office without delay in order that a place may be kept for them.

J. W. Thomas Memorial Fund.—It is necessary to close this Fund at the end of January. Will all those who have subscription forms please send them on together with the necessary remittances as soon as possible? Blank forms must also be returned.

The Labour College (London).—Mr. George Sims is no longer Secretary of the Labour College, London.

N.C.L.C. Calendar.—The N.C.L.C. has printed an attractive calendar in blue and white with a striking drawing by J. F. H. Copies can be had at the rate of 7d. post free, cash with order. 5s. per dozen, postage extra.

What the Divisions are doing

Div. 1.—London Division has held public propaganda meetings at which Comrades Saklatvala, M.P. and George Hicks were speakers. Thirty-one (31) classes are now running, including new ones at Croydon, King's Cross, Camberwell, Cricklewood and Bromley (Kent).

Div. 2.—Arrangements are being made for a number of week-end schools with H. Wynn Cuthbert as lecturer.

Div. 4 boasts of fourteen established Labour Colleges, four affiliated class groups, with a total of fifty classes. Both Ebbw Vale and the Western Valley Districts are amongst the latest groups of miners to support the local work. Aberavon Labour College ran a successful week-end school with W. W. Craik as Lecturer. A note from Allen Pope shows that the Cardiff Labour College is making considerable progress. The Trades Council is giving its active support and classes are being arranged in various wards in the City. If the progress continues at the present rate it is hoped to have a full-time tutor for the Cardiff District next year.

Div. 5.—Classes in this area have found it an advantage to utilise an ordinary lecture given one week as the subject matter for a speakers' practice class in the following week. The organiser supplies the synopsis which is worked up into fifteen minute speeches by the students. A lecture tour has been arranged for J. T. W. Newbold and lantern lectures are also to be given. Already about six Bristol branches of the Transport Workers have turned down the W.E.A. approaches in connection with the Union's Educational Scheme.

Div. 6.—It is hoped to extend our work in the Potteries during the remainder of the winter.

Div. 7.—Successful steps are being taken to establish a strong Labour College in Wakefield. In the meantime Divisional Organiser Shaw, 35, Blacker Road, N., Birkby, Huddersfield, is acting as Secretary. There are prospects of a good class in the Otley District in conjunction with the Trades and Labour Council. In Leeds the A.E.U. Shop Stewards are being invited to canvass the shops for students. This is an excellent idea that might be copied elsewhere. Comrade Ward of Kippax, is to take up a new class in the Castleford District. Comrade Waight is removing from this Division into Division 8, and our very great loss is that Division's gain.

Div. 8.—N.E. Lancs. Area Council reports a very successful series of meetings with J. T. W. Newbold as Lecturer. On the whole the lectures received an exceptionally good press.

Blackburn Labour College in conjunction with the Trades Council Labour Party has arranged a Course on "Local Government." J. D. Walmsley tells us that the Earlstown Trades Council arranged a very successful recital by Soermus and Ullman, at which a great boost was given to the work of the N.C.L.C. in the locality. New classes have been started at Bootle and Prescot.

Div. 9.—160 delegates attended a conference held in Barrow when it was decided to start classes in the first week of the New Year. We hope that this is the first step to building a sound local movement and that the various working-class organisations will give all possible support to Secretary Mowatt, 14, Hall Street, Barrow-in-Furness.

Div. 10.—Aberdeen District Secretary, W. Morrison, reports having started two classes at Fraserburgh. Congratulations to Aberdeen! Glasgow has opened a special N.U.D.A.W. class at which twenty-five students enrolled on the first evening. Mr. E. E. Andrews of the Paisley branch of the Tailors and Garment Workers has organised a very successful Correspondence Course Group who meet periodically to discuss the difficulties that crop up in the courses they are taking. Stirlingshire Miners have affiliated to the Stirlingshire District. This affiliation provides for free classes for the members. A conference is being held in Dumbarton with Comrade Irvine, convenor of the local Housing Committee as chairman. Edinburgh is opening new classes in Bo'ness and Livingstone. Lanarkshire District has 28 classes, and reports a big improvement in the attendance of members of organisations having N.C.L.C. schemes.

Div. 11.—Considerable progress has been made in organising the Belfast Labour College. Samuel McCoubrey has been appointed Secretary; Hugh Gemmell, lecturer, and J. Freeland, organising district delegate of the A.E.U., President. Classes are arranged to begin in January. The movement looks to Belfast to give a good account of itself!

Div. 12.—Thanks to the energy and enthusiasm of Comrade Stevens, the Secretary of the Nottingham branch of the Sheet Metal Workers, fully twenty members of the branch are attending the N.C.L.C. class. It is with regret that we note that Comrade Comrie has been compelled to resign the secretaryship of the Nottingham College as the result of ill-health, and we hope he will speedily recover. In F. G. James, of the Sheet Metal Workers, we have a new Secretary whom we feel sure will make the movement felt in Nottingham. A conference was held in the Miners' Office, Chesterfield, in December with Frank Hall, General Secretary of the Derbyshire Miners, in the chair. The Chesterfield and District Labour College has issued a very useful syllabus in connection with its class work. F. Shaw and C. Brown had a very successful conference in Lincoln. A Committee was formed with George Deer, organiser of the Workers' Union, as chairman.

Directory.—Additions and Corrections

Div. 1.—Brighton L.C., Sec.: J. M. Harrison, Highlands, Mile Oak Rd., Portslade, Sussex.

Div. 2.—Burley Class Group, Sec.: Madame Bréchot, Greenbank, Burley, Brockenhurst, Hants.

Div. 4.—Cardiff L.C., Sec.: E. J. Pearce, 31, Merches Gardens, Cardiff.

" Aberdare L.C., Sec.: D. Davies, 29, Gadleys Street, Aberdare, Wales.

Div. 4.—Glynneath L.C., Sec.: E. Sherlock, 10, Edwards Street, Gwmgwrach, near Neath, Wales.

,, Gorseinon L.C., Sec.: H. I. Griffiths, "Llwynteg," Dulais Road, Gorseinon, Glamorgan, Wales.

,, Rhondda and District L.C., Sec.: Trevor Lewis, 23, Church Terrace, Ynyshir, Rhondda, Wales.

,, Rogerstone Class Group, Sec.: S. J. Vick, "Ingleside," Park Avenue, Rogerstone, Newport, Monmouth, Wales.

,, West Wales District Council, Sec.: H. J. Pratt, 70, Port Tennant Road, St. Thomas, Swansea.

Div. 4.—Ystrad Mynach Class Group, Sec.: L. T. Jones, 17, Station Road, Ystrad Mynach, Cardiff.

Div. 7.—Dewsbury L.C., Sec.: A. Hepworth, 1, Victoria Buildings, Leeds Road, Dewsbury.

Div. 8.—Preston L.C., Sec.: A. W. Field, 11, Manor Avenue Fulwood, near Preston.

Div. 12.—Chesterfield and District L.C., Sec.: W. H. Bennett, 31, Poolsbrook Crescent, Staveley, near Chesterfield.

,, Mansfield and District L.C., Sec.: Mrs. Smith, "Painters," Gilcroft Street, Mansfield, Notts.

,, Nottingham L.C., Sec.: F. James, 11, Mettham Street, Lenton, Nottingham.

National Minority Movement: Forthcoming Conference

A Conference of the National Minority Movement is to be held in Battersea Town Hall, on Sunday, January 25th, commencing 11 a.m. A. J. Cook will preside, and Harry Pollitt will report on the All-Russian Trades Union Congress—and presumably make reference to the visit of the British T.U.C. Delegation.

Branches, District Committees and Trade Councils are invited to send delegates. Credential cards will be sent on payment of a fee of 1s. Application forms can be obtained from the Secretary, 38, Great Ormond Street, W.C. 1.

All Plebs interested in the effort to increase industrial militancy and to secure expression for rank and file opinion should see to it that their T.U. branch is represented; and should further, if attending the Conference as delegates, do whatever is in their power to stress the importance to the Movement of Independent Working-Class Education.

MAPS
for Economic Geography Classes

WE have had numerous inquiries whether we could supply wall-maps for use in classes along with our Economic Geography Textbook. We can now make the following offer:—We will supply a set of six maps, each hand-coloured on stout paper, about 30 in. by 40 in., uniform with those used by J. F. H. in his Geography lectures (and exhibited by him at the Cober Hill Summer School last June).

These are (1) The World, showing the Five Great Groups; (2) The British Empire, illustrating its main concentration around the Indian Ocean; (3) The Chief Economic Zones of the

United States; (4) The Far East; (5) "Food Zones" in Russia; (6) The French Empire in Europe.

These maps will be made from Philips' large outline series, coloured to J. F. H.'s directions. The price will be 5s. each, or 25s. the set of six (postage extra in each case). For any further particulars write PLEBS Office. Remember, that as these can only be executed to order, by hand, we cannot guarantee supply by return; so mention the date you want them by, if a particular date is important.

The PLEBS Bookshelf

I FIND, on looking through the Index to Vol. XVI., that I wrote only three "Bookshelfs" (I take it that is correct?) last year. Since on various occasions readers of The PLEBS have been kind enough to write and say nice things about this feature, and even to express disappointment when it was missing, I feel that I owe some sort of an apology. Will all those, therefore, who feel likewise take the apology as uttered; and I will do my best to make a better record this year.

My last "Bookshelf" appeared in the October number, since when—until this month—I have had no part nor lot in the production of the magazine. Perhaps I may be permitted to remark that this is the first time for ten years such a thing has happened; and, further, to express my personal thanks to Maurice Dobb for carrying on while I have been away. Which reminds me again that I have never—publicly—thanked R. W. Postgate and Mark Starr for much editorial assistance during the past two or three years; so let me do it now; and having done it, get back to that October "Bookshelf."

Therein I pleaded that we in the Labour College movement should pay more attention, in the way both of study and of practice, to imaginative literature—to fiction, the drama, and poetry. I urged that play-readings might usefully form a part of our work; and even went so far as to suggest that The PLEBS might consider the publication of novels as well as of textbooks. I anticipated some protest; but so far none has come along. All the correspondents who have written in on the subject agree that such a development of our work is eminently desirable; though one or two take exception to Michael Gold's poem (published in the October PLEBS) as an example of the kind of poetry we ought to want people to read—and write. "J. P.", whose letter was printed last month, makes the quite arguable point that since monotony is already "the curse of the present-day worker" we ought to aim at giving him, in novels and poems, *not* pictures of working-class life, but stuff which will appeal to and stimulate his sense of beauty—even though it be of the "moonlight-and-roses" kind which Gold scorned. "It would not help much," says "J. P.", "if after each day's monotonous work the worker returned home to find the monotonous strain continued in his paper, books, and music."

Now I don't for a moment agree that pen-pictures, in prose or verse, of the worker's life need necessarily be monotonous at all. All the same the point needs to be borne in mind—especially by *non*-manual workers writing about the lives of manual workers. They may find it much more exciting to write about things which to them are unfamiliar than the men who have to *do* those things daily will find it to read about. That's rather an involved sentence; what I mean—to put it in concrete form—is that while Mr. Kipling may get quite thrilled cataloguing all the details of some technical process, the engineer or mechanic who spends his life at that particular job may find the narrative somewhat boring. It certainly *is* easier to see romance in a machine if you don't happen to be that machine's slave. And the writer, therefore, who will draw the really significant pictures of the life of the workers will himself be a proletarian, at least in spirit; one, that is, who sees no romance where proletarians fail to see it. Those "really significant" pictures will not be monotonous, because really significant things never are. But let us beware of hailing as the real thing any sort of novel, play, or poem which happens to take workers or working-class life as its subject-matter—if only because to us the subject is too important to be allowed to become monotonous.

" J. P." does not only object to the " proletarian kind " of poetry as per Michael Gold's sample because it " makes for the monotonous " ; he also thinks its rhythm " crude." A Greenwich comrade also writes : " It [Gold's poem] may contain sentiment, but where IS the poetry ? "—by which distinction, I take it, he refers disrespectfully to the " free " rhythms in which the poem was written. Now I don't want to get involved in any controversy about the merits or otherwise of " free verse." Some of it certainly seems to me to be prose arbitrarily cut into short lengths. Nevertheless I would point out to " J. P." and to the man fra' Greenwich that rhythm isn't necessarily " crude "—or non-existent—because it doesn't happen to be set to a regular pattern. Have it if you like that stuff written to irregular rhythms is neither prose nor poetry, but something betwixt and between ; the fact remains that that " something " can be tremendously effective, as *Masses and Man* proves.

[Here I can conveniently mention that we have secured a few dozen more copies of the special cheap edition of *Masses and Man* (price 1s. 6d., postpaid 1s. 7½d.), and that if you write in to The PLEBS Office without further delay you may be able to get one for yourself after all —that is, if you're one of the many people who put off ordering a copy until it was too late to secure one of our original supply.]

We stand for a new scale of social values, and a new attitude to life. Don't let us be afraid, therefore, of new experiments in " form "—whether in poems, plays or novels.

Regarding the study of literature in N.C.L.C. classes I have received two cheering letters ; one from J. S. Dunbar, of Edinburgh, who encloses a syllabus of the Edinburgh District classes showing that he is this session taking a class in " Literature in the Last Stage of Capitalism " ; and the other from A. L. Gwilliam, of Manchester, reporting that he delivered a similar series of lectures to Manchester Labour College members a year or two back. I hope other classes are going to follow suit. . . . From Chas. Ashleigh comes a letter expressing keen interest in the suggestion that we should try to produce such plays as Upton Sinclair's *Singing Jailbirds*,* and offering his assistance if any group want to do that particular play. As Ashleigh was in the I.W.W. for eight years, before the U.S. Government returned him to Europe without thanks, he ought to be able to make valuable suggestions as regards " atmosphere," not to mention the fact that he also knows the right tunes of all the songs introduced. Ashleigh mentions, by the way, that he saw *Masses and Man* produced in Moscow, and makes the interesting comment that the Moscow audience got very wearied of " the long self-questionings of the Woman—she makes such a damn fuss about her precious soul." When in the final scene the Woman refuses to escape because it would involve killing someone else, he says the Moscow version made the Nameless One reply " All right, stay where you are, and we'll make a martyr out of you ! It'll be good for propaganda ! " And the Russian crowd cheered appreciatively !

Let us switch off for a moment from Drama to Geography. Every economic geography student should get Page Arnots' *The Politics of Oil*, the latest addition to the Labour Research Department's " Labour and Capital " Series (1s.). It is an invaluable little volume, surveying the whole field of this highly important department of Imperialism, and putting the facts for which one had to rely on Delaisi and half a dozen other books into compact form. It describes the big Trusts, has a whole chapter on The Royal Dutch-Shell, an appendix on Teapot Dome, and some highly interesting new material—new to me, anyway—in a section dealing with the lot of the oil-field workers. On his last page Arnot writes :—

Only by gaining a sure knowledge

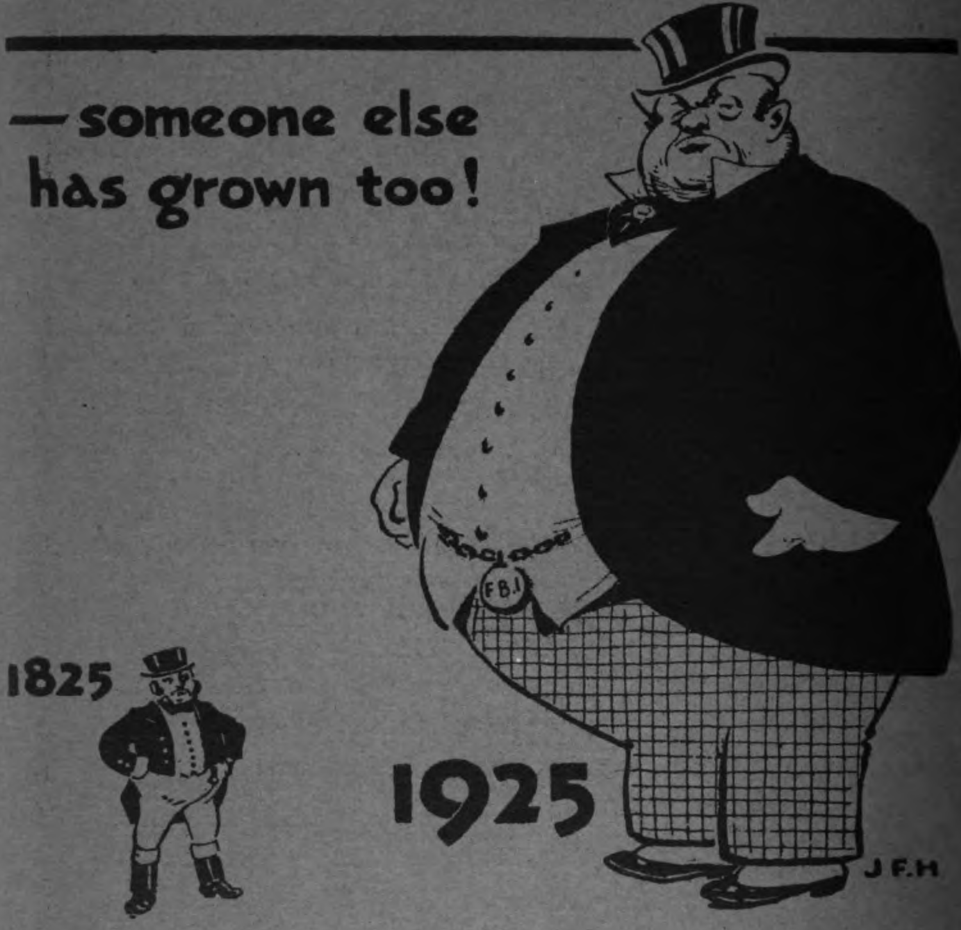
* Of which The PLEBS is arranging to get a supply.

of the meaning of Imperialism, only by getting a ready apprehension of what things may lead either to the outbreak of war or to a new employers' offensive against wages and hours or to an insidious degradation of the whole life of their class, can the workers hope to fortify themselves against these dangers. . . . If they can realise that the information contained in "City Notes" and the prospectuses of the Press is far more pregnant with meaning for them than the "news" on the "form" of royal personages and horses; if they can realise with a deeper irony than they do at present what lies behind the resplendent orations of statesmen, they will be better guarded against the dangers of Imperialism.

The case for I.W.C.E. could scarcely be better put!

I have promised "the Office" to remind readers of some of the books which can be obtained direct from The PLEBS. *Masses and Man* and *Singing Jailbirds* I have already mentioned. Don't forget, also, that we have another play in our list—F. J. Adkins' *Education—A Medley*—of which the *Common Room*, the journal of the Educational Settlements Association, observes in pained tones—"We supposed Mr. Adkins to be a historian: we know him to be a member of an ancient university. But *Education* betrays him in neither respect." Which goes to show that the orthodox don't like fun to be poked at "ancient universities." (Price 2s. 6d., postpaid 2s. 8d.). . . . Turning to more "serious" works, there is Ness Edwards' *Industrial Revolution in S. Wales* (reviewed by Newbold on another page). This book, by a keen Labour College man, should certainly be on every tutor's bookshelf. (2s. 6d., postpaid 2s. 8d.). . . . And there is the new cheap edition—at the amazing price of 2s.—of the Hammonds' great book, *The Town Labourer*. It ought not to be necessary to boost this. If you haven't already got it on your shelves, seize this opportunity while there are copies going at this figure. . . . You will have seen by the announcements on other pages that the two recent additions to our Sixpenny Series, *Fascism* and *The Co-operative Movement*, are going strong; and that the *Outline of Economic Geography* has had to be reprinted, and copies are now ready for delivery. . . . Lastly, please note that bound volumes of last year's PLEBS are obtainable (price 7s.); while if you've preserved your own copies we can supply you with a cloth binding case to keep them in, for 1s. 6d.

J. F. H.



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