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The Organ of the National Council of Labour Colleges

THE PLEBS

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FACTS THAT TALK

What the Unions are doing

Here are some up-to-date figures which indicate the notable advance of our movement during the past year or two. We ask our readers to make these facts known as widely as possible.

IN view of the importance of Trade Union Education nowadays, it will be well worth while showing exactly what the Trade Unions are doing. To do this, one is concerned not with the Trade Unions that have done nothing but with those that have actually taken some definite steps. By that, we mean not mere affiliation, but a definite arrangement of some kind of educational facilities dealing with the problems of Trade Unionism. These Educational Schemes, as they are called, can, as a rule, be divided into two classes: (1) those that provide for the rank and file such facilities as free access to Evening Classes, free Correspondence Courses, and Summer Schools; (2) those that provide for Residential tuition.

At the N.C.L.C.'s Annual Meeting held in May, it was reported that during the year ending 31st March, 1925, ten Unions had for the first time arranged N.C.L.C. Educational Schemes, and since then two more have joined. Below is a table showing the relative strength of Independent Working-Class Education and University Extension in the Trade Union Movement:—

<i>Unions with N.C.L.C. Schemes.</i>		<i>Unions with W.E.A.—W.E.T.U.C. Schemes.</i>	
	<i>Membership.</i>		<i>Membership.</i>
Amal. Engineering Union. ..	245,000	Iron and Steel Trades Confn. ..	95,438
Derbyshire Miners	40,000	Union of P.O. Workers ..	80,000
Fife Mine. Reform Union ..	6,000	Railway Clerks' Assoc. ..	60,000
Liver. and Dist. Carters' and Motormen's Union ..	10,000	Eng. and Ship. Draughtsmen	11,000
Furnishing Trades Assoc. ..	21,810	Natl. Society Operative Printers and Assistants ..	17,262
N.U.D.A.W.	90,009	Transport and Gen. Workers	300,000
S. Wales Miners' Fedn. (partly)	150,000	Wire Drawers	5,130
Stirlingshire Miners	6,000		
Transport and Gen. Workers	300,000		568,830
Agricultural Workers ..	30,000		
Building Trade Workers ..	58,703		
Lanarkshire Miners	40,000		
Managers' and Overlookers' .	3,500		
Mid. and E. Lothian Miners..	12,000		
Natl. Assoc. Plasterers ..	10,300		
Shale Miners and Oil Workers	9,000		

Unions with N.C.L.C. Schemes.

		Membership.
Sheet Metal Workers and Braziers	14,000
Tailors and Gar. Workers	50,435
W. Lothian Miners	4,000
A.S.L.E. and F.	60,000
		1,160,757

The membership figures in most cases have been copied from the Labour Year Book. Unions simply providing an odd Scholarship or two at summer schools, and which do not have definite Educational Schemes are not included in the above. The list is complete so far as our information goes.

It will be noticed that the N.C.L.C. (the younger of the two organisations) has twenty schemes, whereas the W.E.A.—W.E.T.U.C. combined have only seven. Moreover, the membership of the Unions having N.C.L.C. Schemes is 1,160,757, whereas the membership of the Unions having W.E.A.—W.E.T.U.C. Schemes is only 568,830. Quite a number of the Unions now having N.C.L.C. Schemes were once affiliated to the W.E.A. If space were available, we could go further and show that not only is the number of N.C.L.C. Unions and their membership greater than the number of W.E.A.—W.E.T.U.C. Unions and their membership, but that the *amounts paid per member per annum* are higher in the case of the N.C.L.C. On the average, the amount paid per Union member to the N.C.L.C. is about 3d.

Again, the N.C.L.C. Schemes are *much more comprehensive*. They provide, as a rule, free access on presentation of Union Card to all N.C.L.C. Classes in Britain and Ireland*, free Correspondence Courses, and free access to non-residential Day and Week-end Schools.

If we turn to the Trade Union Residential Schemes, we find that according to the latest figures, Ruskin College (which stands for an educational policy similar to the W.E.A.'s, and which, like the W.E.A., has its work subsidised by the Government) is not merely failing to increase its number of Union Schemes, but is not even holding its own. Recent withdrawals so far as residential scholarships are concerned are those of the Transport and General Workers and the Amalgamated Engineering Union. In the latter case, the Union withdrew its six Students, and the money so saved formed part of the sum now being paid for its N.C.L.C. Scheme.

The following is a table, based on the latest information

* The N.C.L.C. is the only working-class educational body with a full-time organiser in Ireland.

available, of the Unions sending students to the Labour College (London) and to Ruskin College :—

<i>Unions with Labour College Residential Schemes.</i>		<i>Unions with Ruskin College Residential Schemes.</i>	
	<i>Membership.</i>		<i>Membership.</i>
Nat. Union of Railwaymen ..	327,374	London Soc. of Compositors..	14,800
S. Wales Miners' Fedn. ..	150,000	Op. Printers and Assistants..	17,262
Northumberland Miners ..	38,000	Northumberland Miners ..	38,000
Durham Miners ..	126,000		
Upholsterers ..	6,093		
Amal. Society of Dyers ..	30,991		
	678,458		70,062

An important point is that while the six Unions with Labour College schemes send some thirty-four students to the College, the three Unions with residential schemes at Ruskin College (as far as we can gather) do not send more than six—if that.

If we summarise the two tables given above for Evening Class and Residential Schemes, we find that the number and membership of the Unions that support Independent Working-Class Education are very much greater than the number and membership of those that support the W.E.A.'s educational policy.

The figures are :—

	<i>No.</i>	<i>Membership.</i>
Unions with N.C.L.C. Schemes	25	1,689,215
Unions with W.E.A.—Ruskin Schemes	9	621,630

The enormous support in the Trade Union Movement that the N.C.L.C. now has is indicated by the fact that the Unions which have Labour College Educational Schemes have a membership of 1,689,215, which forms a very large proportion of the total membership of 4,328,235 affiliated to the British Trade Union Congress.

The matter might be put in another way by saying that while only 14 per cent. of the members affiliated to the Congress have W.E.A.—Ruskin College Educational Schemes, close on 40 per cent. are in Unions which have N.C.L.C. Educational Schemes.

Satisfactory as that position is there are still many Unions that do not have educational schemes, and it is up to all N.C.L.C.ers to bring them within the fold during the next twelve months.

J. P. M. MILLAR.

Push our two new pamphlets

THE BANKS AND THE WORKERS

By A. Woodburn (4d.)

BULGARIA

By C. L. Malone (2d.)

THE N.C.L.C. CONFERENCE

Discussion on the T.U.C. Scheme

THE Conference held at Rothesay, on Saturday and Sunday, May 30th and 31st, was the biggest and most representative which the N.C.L.C. has yet held. There were forty-nine delegates—every Division and most of the affiliated Unions being represented. In addition there were close on a hundred visitors, most of them active workers in the movement; and these, though they took no part in the formal discussions, followed every debate with keen interest—and continued them informally but enthusiastically in the intervals between each session.

The big item on the agenda was of course the Trades Union Congress Scheme, which was reserved until the Sunday morning in order that delegates who could not arrive until late on Saturday should be able to take part.

The chair was taken by Mr. HODGETTS (N.U.D.A.W. representative on the E.C.), in order that the President, J. HAMILTON, should be free to move the E.C. resolution accepting the Scheme, under certain conditions.

HAMILTON gave an admirably lucid summary of the somewhat tangled story of the negotiations. He recalled how in the first place the N.C.L.C. was not invited to take part at all, only securing "recognition" by the good offices of the governors of the Labour College (London)—good offices which were confined to those earlier stages. Although the N.C.L.C. did not need a Scheme of this kind, since the support it was receiving from individual Unions was steadily increasing, it could not possibly stand aloof from the negotiations once these were initiated, unless it was to risk losing the support it had won. He admitted quite frankly that the Scheme was a disappointment in so far as it did not declare unequivocally for the principle of Independent Working-Class Education. But the point to remember was that its very looseness enabled us—if we made up our minds to it—to push it, in actual working, more and more *our* way. The W.E.A. had accepted the Scheme, and would monopolise it if we stood out.

Another point of importance was that the Unions controlling the London Labour College were almost certain to hand that institution over to the T.U.C.; and if the I.W.C.E. movement were to have any voice at all in its control we must accept the Scheme. Some

such control was eminently desirable in the best interests of the movement the College was founded to serve.

From every point of view, Hamilton concluded, he thought it was the duty of the N.C.L.C. to take the opportunities for still wider activities which the Scheme offered. "With faith, courage, and imagination we can make it the beginning of a new and significant chapter in our history."

The resolution was formally seconded from the body of the hall.

DIXON (Halifax) led off for the opposition. He regretted that Hamilton had confined himself in the main to a resumé of past negotiations. It would have been more to the point if they could have had some outline from the E.C. of the way in which they thought the Scheme was going to work out in actual practice. He could not get over the plain fact that we were being asked to work hand-in-hand with people whom we had consistently opposed in the past. The vital question was the *interpretation* likely to be put on certain clauses of the Scheme ; and some of them felt that, as things stood, this was so doubtful a matter that it would be far better to reject the Scheme altogether.

THOM (London) supported the Halifax opposition to the Scheme. His Council felt that the movement should have been consulted at an earlier stage of the negotiations. As it was, the Scheme was presented as something like an ultimatum—and since it involved a surrender of I.W.C.E. principles the London Council was emphatically opposed to it.

FRANKEL (Tailors and Garment Workers) urged that we should be shirking our responsibilities if we stood aloof from the Scheme. Our business was to get inside, and permeate. We should, moreover, be putting ourselves at a hopeless disadvantage if we remained outside. "N.C.L.C. v. W.E.A." was a fight we had practically won. But "N.C.L.C. v. T.U.C." would be a very different proposition. As a Union representative, he wanted to emphasise that many of them would have great difficulty in keeping their Union's support for the N.C.L.C. if this involved any sort of opposition to a T.U.C. Scheme.

ROYLE (Sheffield) caused some hilarity by declaring that—for once!—he was supporting the E.C. But he felt that the Scheme would emphasise the need for more rank and file control of N.C.L.C. administration and policy.

ELLIS (Div. 11, Ireland) urged that the development of the Labour movement meant that we must adapt ourselves to new conditions. One important tendency to-day was towards the centralisation of control in the hands of the General Council, instead of individual unions each pursuing different policies. The T.U.C. Educational Scheme was in line with this development, and unless

we were to be left behind we must make the most of it. Given vigorous Plebs groups in every district—groups with a big bark and a big bite!—he did not see that there was any real danger ahead.

BROOKE (Div. 7) pointed out that so long as the N.C.L.C. kept control of its own organisation there was nothing to be afraid of. He agreed with Hamilton that it was all the better for us that on certain points the Scheme was vague, since greater precision might have hampered the advocacy of the principles we stood for.

AITKEN (Scottish L.C.) said that if we rejected the Scheme we should be helping, not hurting, the W.E.A. The strength of our movement was its dependence on numbers of voluntary, *conscientious* workers; and this alone was an adequate safeguard against any compromise of principles in the actual working of the Scheme.

GEMMELL (Belfast) said the Scheme would give the W.E.A. its deathblow, unless it came into line with the N.C.L.C. It was

ANOTHER W.E.A.er SEES THE LIGHT

"She was prepared to say that there never had been, and never would be, an unbiassed education."

Mrs. Barbara Wootton, late editor of *The Highway*, at annual meeting of the Southern Co-operative Educational Association.

our business to set the pace. He was emphatically in favour of acceptance.

G. PHIPPEN (London) opposed. He thought the Scheme would give the W.E.A. a new lease of life, since we should go into it fettered in various ways, and should be unable to attack as effectively as we could now. Full freedom for our propaganda was vital to our work; and this, he felt, would be very seriously limited if we accepted the Scheme.

POSTGATE (Plebs League) remarked that some surprise had been expressed that the League, the "left wing" of our movement, should have declared in favour of the Scheme. But the question had been before the Plebs E.C. three times, and there had been a gradual and unanimous conviction of the necessity for acceptance. It was good tactics to find out what your opponents wanted you to do—and then do the opposite; and the W.E.A. was hoping against hope that the N.C.L.C. would reject the Scheme. They would be smashed if they did reject it; and while it might be very romantic to adopt a heroic Sidney Carton attitude, it was a far, far better thing to face facts. There were various safeguards against the so-called "dangers" of the Scheme. In the first place, the "joint

committees" could be made battle-grounds on which our principles could be unflinchingly put forward. Secondly, The PLEBS would maintain its criticism and exposure of W.E.A. fallacies. Thirdly, the membership and organisation of the League could be, and must be, strengthened.

OWEN (Div. 4, S. Wales) withdrew the amendment suggesting that any decision for or against the Scheme should be postponed for twelve months.

GEO. HICKS (A.U.B.T.W.) said that apparently some opponents of the Scheme were afraid that the N.C.L.C. was going to be "captured" by the T.U.C. He urged that we could, if we would, capture the T.U.C. for I.W.C.E. principles; the Scheme gave us the chance to do this. Another point put forward was that under the Scheme our propaganda would be handicapped. But it would be far more badly handicapped if we had to attack the T.U.C. in order to put our case.

The vote was then taken. The figures were—For acceptance of the Scheme, 31. Against, 6. (This of course has to be ratified by postal ballot of all affiliated bodies.)

The opening day of the Conference was taken up by the President's address, in which reference was made to our late comrade, J. W. Thomas, of Halifax, and to Mr. MacOrnish Dott's generous gift of £200 to found a N.C.L.C. Library in memory of his daughter, Jean Dott; and by the Secretary's and Financial Reports, both of which were unanimously adopted (statistics from the former will be found in an article on another page).

There were various other items of interest on the agenda after the discussion of the T.U.C. Scheme on Sunday.

BROWN (Div. 12) moved the E.C. resolution re-drafting the "Objects" of the N.C.L.C. BROOKE (Div. 7) moved an amendment inserting, after "independent working-class education," the words "from a Marxian standpoint." ROYLE (Sheffield) seconded, and DIXON (Halifax) supported, the latter declaring that there had been too much "broadening" in our movement lately. MILLAR (for the E.C.) vigorously opposed the amendment. We needed, he insisted, English words for English things. "Independent working-class education" was a clear-cut phrase with a clear-cut meaning. Nothing was gained in precision by adding the word "Marxian." In fact, those delegates who had been present at the International Workers' Education Conference at Oxford last August would recall that the bitterest opposition to I.W.C.E., defined as "education based on the fact of the class-struggle," came from groups calling themselves Marxians. IRVINE (Tailors

and Garment Workers) supported the amendment, and STARR (Div. 3) opposed. The voting was 16 for the amendment, 20 against.

The E.C.'s resolutions making certain changes in the Constitution under the heading of "Affiliations and Finance" were agreed to, the chairman (on behalf of the E.C.) agreeing to amend Clause 3 (a) on the lines suggested by POSTGATE (Plebs League)—"the E.C.'s approval of any affiliated group not to be withdrawn except in cases of failure to carry out I.W.C.E. principles."

Under the heading of Administration, BROOKE (Div. 7) moved an amendment to give each of the twelve Divisions of the N.C.L.C. a representative on the E.C., but making the Divisional Organisers ineligible for these positions. DIXON and ROYLE supported. COXON (for the E.C.) opposed the amendment, pointing out that the E.C.'s proposal to increase the number of representatives elected at the annual conference from three to five, was as far as it was practical to go at present in increasing the size of the Executive. F. PHIPPEN (Div. 5) supported the amendment, except for the "ineligibility of 'employees' clause." J. JAGGER (N.U.D.A.W.) said that the Labour Movement stood for workers' control, and to put forward the suggestion that the paid workers in our own movement should be barred from representative positions was a monstrous proceeding. WOODBURN (Edinburgh) also opposed the amendment, and MILLAR (for the E.C.) pointed out that to increase the number of E.C. members would make a heavy addition to central expenses, at a time when practically all the Divisions were asking the centre to grant them more funds. The amendment was defeated.

Div. 7 next put forward resolutions (1) that each Division should appoint its own Organiser, instead of, as at present, the appointment being made by the National Executive; this was lost. (2) That the Executive should issue a N.C.L.C. *Bulletin*; this was opposed by COXON (for the E.C.), mainly on grounds of expense, and was lost. (3) That more pages of *The Plebs* should be devoted to N.C.L.C. news. POSTGATE (Plebs League) pointed out that though this might be practicable if the extra cost were met by the N.C.L.C., ordinary readers were not interested in the details of organisation, and additional matter of this kind was not likely to improve the circulation. STARR (Div. 3) added that the magazine was not the place in which to discuss detailed points of policy or administration, and MILLAR (Nat. Sec.) remarked that he often had difficulty in getting local and divisional secretaries to send him material enough to fill the space allotted to him in *The Plebs* at present. This resolution was also lost.

COXON (Newcastle), HAMILTON (Liverpool), W. J. OWEN (S. Wales), STARR (Eastern Counties), THOM (London), BROWN

(Notts), Mrs. TAYLOR (Preston), BROOK (Bradford), and T. D. SMITH (W. Bromwich), were nominated for the E.C. The five first-named were elected.

HORRABIN (Editor, PLEBS) reported briefly on the publication activities of the year, and stressed the fact that the circulation of The PLEBS had increased so rapidly as to make the 10,000 mark a fairly sure thing for next winter. The fact that we had our own publications department was a big asset in our favour in entering the T.U.C. Scheme, and it was up to all N.C.L.C.ers to help in every way in developing I.W.C.E. literature.

J. F. H.

A SUMMER (*Scotch Summer*) SCHOOL

Rothesay, May 29th—June 6th

THERE were moments during the week of the Rothesay "Summer" School when we felt that a letter ought to be added to the name of the island we had invaded, and that in future it should be known as the Island of Brute. While the adjacent island of Great Britain was sweltering under a heat wave, we—for the first five days of one week at any rate—shivered 'neath rainstorms, cauld blasts, and mountain mists. Caledonia, as someone observed, was stern—and *we* were wild.

But if the weather damped the bed-clothes it didn't damp our spirits. This may have been, in part, due to the presence of a strong Irish contingent. They're so accustomed to rain in Erin's Isle that showers only seem to make them sing louder. And before the week was very old we not only sang; we had our own International San Toy Banana Band (under Bandmaster W. J. Owen) and proved conclusively that once I.W.C.E.ers decide to "broaden" to the extent of making music one of their activities, they'll make their mark there as elsewhere. To hear that band (one concertina, four first and two second mouth-organs, three combs, four rattles, and selected tympani) render "It ain't goin' to rain no mo'" was to be nerved anew for the class-struggle.

In fact, the musical talent discovered and displayed during the week was remarkable. At every concert a sing-song or queue of soloists waited to mount the platform. There was a Zummerzet comrade who made the violin on which he performed; there was a Leicester man who did solos on the "bones"; there were

“lashins” of singers—including pretty nearly every Scotsman and Irishman present. One evening—when Philips Price sang “Stenka Razin” in Russian, and Joe Crispin “Madelon” in French—we felt really international. . . . And there were some toney dancers—Williams, of Birkenhead, for style and Clancy, of Battersea, for spirit!

Drama, as well as music, was well looked after. Edinburgh struck a new and highly successful note by combining the reading of a play with a simple scenic setting and appropriate action. Shaw's *Augustus Does His Bit*, with Arthur Woodburn, Sidney Walker, and Miss J. Lee in the cast, opened the repertoire. On the Monday evening, Zangwill's comedy, *Too Much Money*, was in the bill; in this Christine Millar was well supported by J. P. M., C. L. Gray, A. L. McIntosh, S. Walker, Miss Galloway, Barbara Woodburn, and Miss J. Lee. Two evenings later, J. F. and Winifred Horrabin, Mark and Kathleen Starr, Arthur Woodburn, J. Crispin and Geo. Williams (with Russian “accessories” supervised by Philips Price) did Calderon's *The Little Stone House*.

But it is time we said something of the School. The first two days, Saturday and Sunday, were of course, mainly taken up by the N.C.L.C. Conference (see report on another page). But A. J. Cook provided a welcome relief from the discussion of administrative details by a lecture on “Some Problems of the Mining Industry,” which, besides being an interesting summary of vital facts and figures, was a very human appeal for working-class solidarity.

A very interesting and suggestive address by Will Coxon on “Teaching Methods” (Winifred Horrabin in the chair) was the fixture for Whit-Monday morning. Perhaps the most startling point raised in the discussion—and one round which a good deal of wordy warfare raged—was Frank Phippen's declaration that the first thing a teacher of adult classes had to do was to get rid of certain types of would-be students! Another contribution of note was Fred Shaw's summary of the Stages of Deterioration of the British Proletariat—first, boys of the Bulldog breed; then Terriers; then Bantams; and finally having to be “combed out.” . . . In the evening, Ellen Wilkinson, M.P. (Miss Chevenix, an Irish visitor, presiding) gave an informal sort of lecture entitled



GEO. HICKS & J.P.M.M. POSE FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHER

"Parliamentary Sketches." Her word-portraits of certain prominent politicians suggested that if Ellen had been born a political cartoonist she would have belonged to the Vitriolic School.

On Tuesday morning (Jack Hamilton presiding) Dr. Jas. Johnston lectured on "Social and Biological Inequalities." Liverpool students, and those who heard him at Cober Hill last year, know that Dr. Johnston is a model teacher—one who holds the attention of his hearers by no "platform tricks" or extraneous aids of any kind, but by simple, lucid unfolding of a case, point by point, and argument by argument. It is enough to say that at Rothesay he was on the top of his form. . . . After tea, John Jagger lectured on "Problems of the Distributive Industry" (Kathleen Starr presiding).

Wednesday was left open for excursions—and oh! how it rained! But in the evening we had two lectures, and good discussions after each; the first by A. A. Purcell, on "The Problem of International T.U. Unity," for which J. G. Clancy took the chair; the second, with W. J. Owen presiding, by Geo. Hicks on "Problems of the Building Industry." . . . Certainly we ought, with Cook, Jagger, Purcell and Hicks helping us, to have clarified our ideas on a Left Wing industrial policy!

Thursday morning, Comrade T. Irwin (of the General Council, Irish T.U. Congress) took the chair—out of doors at last!—for J. F. Horrabin's lecture on "The Workers' Education Movement in America." . . . In the afternoon some of us had the pleasure of a talk with John S. Clarke.

The present reporter had to leave early on Friday, and was compelled, therefore, to miss Philips Price's lecture on "The European Situation;" and Cathal O'Shannon's and Jack Hamilton's lectures during the week-end.

Altogether—despite the weather—a tremendously successful week; and the best thanks of everyone present are due to J. P. M. M. and his staff for the work they must have put in on the organising side.

And now for Cober Hill!

The Voice of Labour (Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, rd.) of June 13th, had some excellent reproductions of group photographs taken at Rothesay. Comrades desirous of acquiring copies should write to the Editor, 35, Parnell Square, Dublin, enclosing remittance to cover postage.

Have you got it?

WHAT TO READ: A Guide to Books for Worker-Students

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HOW SHALL WE PREPARE FOR REVOLUTION ?

A Problem of Working-Class Organisation

The following article, translated by Eden and Cedar Paul, appeared in the February issue of "La Révolution Proletarienne" (Paris). It raises a question which seems to us to deserve serious consideration and discussion.

AT the close of the preface to his work, "1917," Trotsky stresses the fact that the November revolution was only made possible by the existence of the Bolshevik Party, and emphasises the view that this will apply to any other working-class revolution. He writes: "The proletarian revolution cannot triumph unless there is a proletarian party." Then, abjuring his old "errors," he goes on to say that he was wrong when, in the days before the November revolution, he deplored the "sectarianism" of the bolsheviks.

But was Trotsky wrong in those days, and is he right in his recantation ?

His present contention amounts to this, that a strongly disciplined and rigidly centralised party is essential to the triumph of a working-class insurrection. Who can doubt that he is right ? An insurrection is a military affair. Military methods—discipline, subordination, the suppression of discussion—these are indispensable, and without them there can be no victory. Trotsky's crucial instance is the November revolution, but the Parisian insurrections of the nineteenth century would have served his turn just as well. Whenever the insurgents were faced by a resolute resistance upon the part of the champions of the existing order, what made the insurrection successful was the existence of an organised party, and one in which a military discipline prevailed.

Had there not been a Blanquist Party, strictly disciplined and highly militarised (the true forerunner of the Russian Communist Party), the rising of March 18th, 1871, would have been nothing more than a localised outburst. The affair of the Montmartre guns was transformed into the insurrection of the Commune of Paris for one reason only—because Brunel, Ranvier, and Duval were

permeated with the spirit of Blanquist discipline. As soon as they heard of what had happened at Montmartre in the morning, they all reacted, spontaneously, and in precisely the same fashion. Marshalling their respective battalions, they marched upon the Hôtel de Ville.

The same considerations apply to the various bourgeois revolutions. The July Days (1830) were the work of the republican secret societies. The "ordonnances" of Charles X. would have aroused nothing more than platonic protests from journalists and members of parliament, had there not been secret societies able to mobilise their adherents during the night and ready to take armed action in the morning.

So far, then, we are all agreed. There can be no victorious insurrection, there can be nothing more than a "putsch," unless the movement is led by a militarised organisation—by a bolshevik party, in a word.

That is not the point in dispute. The delicate problem is one of a very different order. What we want to know is, whether a militarised organisation (indispensable for the success of an insurrection) is equally indispensable when our task is *to prepare the whole working class for the revolution*. Can such an organisation effectively foster class-consciousness? Can it make the working class so self-confident and self-reliant that it becomes inspired throughout with a revolutionary will? This is the fundamental problem; for it is obvious that the insurrection, though it be victorious, will be utterly valueless, unless the driving force be a revolutionary will. In default of the revolutionary will, the insurrection will be a mere flash in the pan, and will have no revolutionary future.

Trotsky, following Lenin, and Lenin, following Marx, have said that insurrection is an art. To avoid ambiguity, we shall perhaps do better to say that insurrection is a technique. Now, every technique, insurrection not excepted, needs appropriate tools. The technique of insurrection needs the tool which is a militarised, centralised, and disciplined party. But, for the very reason that such a party is a tool of this kind, it cannot at one and the same time be a tool fitted for the very different technique of creating a "class-conscious and organised" proletariat. Our aim, here, is something very different from our immediate aim in an insurrection. Our aim, here, is to create new values. Among the workers, and engendered by the workers, there must arise an aggregate of ideas, wishes, and social forms antagonistic to those of the dominant class. In the first instance, these will constitute the driving force of the revolution; and subsequently they will be the foundation upon which the new society will be built. But it is self-evident that such creations cannot be achieved by those whose minds have been

sterilised by anything in the nature of military discipline. Creation is the outcome of free activity. The individual cannot create at the word of command—nor can a class create under the orders of drill sergeants.

If the Parisian workers, in the spring of the year 1871, were inspired with a revolutionary will, if they were in that state of "revolutionary preparedness" which enabled the Blanquist leaders to seize the Hôtel de Ville and made of the Commune of Paris the first sketch of the Workers' State—this "revolutionary preparedness" was not the work of the Blanquist Party. The class-consciousness of the Parisian workers had been inspired by the Paris branch of the International Working-men's Association in the Rue de la Corderie, and this was something very different from a centralised and militarised organisation.

Even as far as Russia is concerned, we have to ask ourselves whether the same sort of considerations do not apply. Down to the opening stages of the insurrectionary period, the Bolshevik Party exercised but little influence upon the Russian working class. What, then, had produced the effective class consciousness which was characteristic of the proletariat of Petrograd and Moscow in the year 1917; the class-consciousness thanks to which the Bolshevik Party was able to venture upon insurrection, to seize power, and to hold power against all the forces of the counter-revolution? Was not this class consciousness brought into being by the comparatively supple forms of organisation of which, in those days, Trotsky was an advocate?

Thus there is a contradiction between the type of organisation requisite for carrying through an effective insurrection (including in this term, of course, the whole period of civil war), and the type of organisation requisite for producing a state of "revolutionary preparedness" in the workers. But this contradiction would not embarrass us if there were no confusion of roles. The trouble is that those who are mainly concerned with the tactic of insurrection, and those mainly concerned with developing the "political capacity" of the workers, make precisely the same mistake. Both are equally inclined to give their particular instrument a universal value, to use the tool, not only for the purpose it was designed to fulfil, but for all other purposes as well. That is the cause of the misunderstandings which so often divide the working class.

For a year or more the Russian Bolshevik Party has been engaged in ardent discussions, in which the main desire of the "opposition" has been to voice a demand for fresh air within the Party; to make the organisation less rigidly centralised (so that local officials can be locally chosen, and not imposed from above); to secure greater freedom of discussion and action (the right to form "fractions").

In a word, the aim of the opposition is to make the Party less militarised. Trotsky may "recant his old errors" as much as he pleases; substantially, as far as the question of organisational method is concerned, he revived these ancient "errors" by placing himself in opposition.

Is it not possible that Trotsky was right to renounce these "errors" in 1917; and that he was also right to revive them in 1924?

The situation in Russia has changed a good deal in the meanwhile. . . . There must, consequently, be a correlative change in the type of organisation. The organisation best suited to war-time is not the organisation best suited to peace-time. Those who look facts in the face, those who are not slaves to formulas, those who can recognise the evils that inevitably result from the maintenance of a military type of organisation when peace conditions have supervened, want to refit our tools to the altered circumstances.

In western European lands, there is a persistent cry "Back to the Masses!" The reformist parties have failed miserably, both in Britain and in France, for when in power they consistently practised a petty-bourgeois policy and sedulously avoided anything that might have a revolutionary stamp. Thus the position might seem extremely favourable to the consistent champions of revolutionary action. Why, then, do the communists find themselves increasingly isolated from the masses? Why must we acknowledge, to our shame, that the bulk of organised workers of Europe, outside Russia, accept the leadership of the social democrats and the "moderate" trade unionists—the admitted agents of the bourgeoisie? Is not the chief reason that the workers dislike the rigid forms of organisation prescribed by the Communist International?

Here we are confronted with a very old problem; a difficulty which is not peculiar to the workers. What should be the relationships between civil society and the army? This problem haunted the classical world, just as it has haunted capitalist civilisation. In the ancient world, and in the modern, the same solution was found. *Arma cedant togae*, said the Romans; "let arms give place to civilian attire." Bourgeois legislators insist that the military power must be subordinated to the civil. Whenever these principles have been infringed, whenever civil society has been *permanently* dominated by a military caste, decadence has been the inevitable result.

Cannot the workers solve the problem which their predecessors were able to solve?

The proletariat will make an immense step forward on the day when it is able to establish satisfactory relationships between its civil society, the trade unions, and its military organisation, the Communist Party.

R. LOUZHON.

THE GREATEST UTOPIAN

SOONER or later everybody gets back to Robert Owen.* Educationists and co-operativists, secularists and spiritualists, communists, trade-unionists and socialists, each in their degree find in him some portion of their original inspiration. He was a pioneer in every way. Yet it is doubtful whether he originated anything, and certain that nothing he proposed proved of permanent value.

Robert Owen was the outstanding figure of a time of transition. In his personal and business life he rode on the crest of the rising wave of the industrial revolution. He made fortunes with amazing facility and dissipated them as easily. Towards the end of his long life he was quite mad : it is doubtful if he was ever quite sane, in the sober two-and-two makes four, Man-in-the-Street sense. Possibly because of that—because of his one-eyed devotion to his one idea (or to that one of its many faces that happened to be uppermost in his mind at the moment) he had a bigger personal influence upon the history of his time than ten thousand sane men who need no psycho-analysis.

The central idea around which the whole of Owenism developed has come to be—the necessary qualifications and modifications made—so much of a commonplace that it is hard to recapture the mood in which it made such a revolutionary stir. It is none other than our old friend—“man’s character is made *for* him and not *by* him.”

Given this as a starting point—with the necessary emotional and traditional background to make it a delivering truth—and you get first his enthusiasm for education, then his model factory in New Lanark ; then his repudiation of the orthodox Evangelical morality of Free Will Rewards and Punishments, and their Supernatural Sanctions ; then the notion of Model Communities, model villages in which men and women purged of inculcated hates and customary greeds would co-operate for common well-being.

These proving difficult to realise in practice, it followed logically that he should initiate propaganda societies, and societies for the experimental exchange of Labour products,—incidental and occasional schemes of co-operation having the potentiality of growing into the Real Thing. Baffled again by the complications of the economic reactions whose cure had seemed so simple, the next logical step followed—the Grand National Union. That, in collapsing

*Robert Owen. By G. D. H. Cole (Ernest Benn, 15s.).

under the sheer weight of its own success, liberated the forces which found expression as Trade Unionism and Chartism.

But into these Owen could follow only haltingly and with misgiving. What mattered political reforms in a state composed of people whose characters had yet to be re-formed? What avail was a Trade Union which could only make the best of a fundamentally immoral system? There was nothing for it but to fall back upon the propaganda of the great idea—and absorbed in the idea, losing every day more and more patience with the old order, more and more tenacious in experimenting with ideal communities, more and more living in a world of his own, nature had her revenge, as she will, and he began to see visions and receive communications from the Next World—a world where all characters were well-formed and where Reason dominated to the total exclusion of all passion but benevolence.

Owen's Socialism (says G. D. H. Cole) has often been called "Utopian" and distinguished by that label from the "scientific" Socialism of later times. The description is largely true. Owen's view of human character, extraordinarily valuable as a corrective to the prevailing tendencies of his time, in that it emphasised the influence of environment against those who imputed misery to the poor as a crime, he pushed sometimes to the length of supposing instant regeneration to be the certain result of a change in environment. He was wrong; but he was not stating a falsehood, but overstating a truth. Again in his emphasis on the associative basis of Socialism, and the necessity of building up the Socialist faith as a consciousness of co-operative capacity among the workers, he made a contribution to Socialist thought which, long lost to sight, is only now being again appreciated. As a writer he was long-winded and often prosy; as a man of action he made so many mistakes that his great successes have been largely forgotten. But in the realm of ideas he was immensely the greatest figure in the early development of British Socialism, and I think in the whole of British Socialist history. It is easy to laugh at Owen's foibles, such as his relapse into Spiritualism in his old age; but it is quite impossible not to recognise him as a great pioneer of the faith which, all the world over, the workers are still struggling to make the basis of a new Social System.

We have said that Owen was an outstanding figure in a time of transition. His doctrine, and, still more, a part, at any rate, of his practice, was (and in the form which it has survived still is) a great vehicle of transition.

He was in and of the Industrial Revolution. He saw the coming of the big-power factory and the possibilities of mass production. He proved with small resources and in the teeth of opposition the possibility of all that the Levers, Cadburys, Fords and Rowntrees have with opulence and applause accomplished a century later. Seeing this and doing it he had no illusions about his place in the scheme. While he never quite lost the initial manager-school-master-director's attitude towards the workers, it is still his outstanding merit to have believed that the workers had anything in them at all. And when he helped to form the Grand National

Union he had all but reached the point, little though he realised it, of formulating the doctrine that the "emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself."

We get so busy at times formulating plans and programmes that it is always possible to lose the end in the contemplation of the means. In all the anxiety for the real revolutionary policy which our time begets we are apt to forget that which is the real positive core of this doctrine. Political Programmes, Plans of Action, all these are the weapons of attack—or the defence which is only a modified attack. Behind all these, if they are to be fruitful must be the recognition of the basic revolutionary fact that in the process of class-struggle the working-class itself becomes transformed.

Owen's weakness he shares with the whole brood of reformers who imagine that we have only to change one detail of Man's environment—to shut up the public-houses, to substitute bananas for beef, to enlarge the number of cubic inches of oxygen available in a factory, to give a few more votes or count them a different way—and lo! there will be a new heaven and a new earth.

His strength was his own. He saw the fundamental fact that none before him had seen—that the working class in mass had within them a co-operative capacity which once it became developed to the pitch of general consciousness could be made a foundation upon which to build a New Moral World.

It was left to Marx to grasp the truth clearly and see wholly that which Owen had seen only vaguely and in part. Yet because he saw it even in little just when he did, and gave his life in the teeth of every discouragement to preach it to all the world, there are few names we should honour more highly than that of Robert Owen.

THOS. A. JACKSON.

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CO-OPERATORS & WORKERS' EDUCATION

OUR readers may have noticed various newspaper reports of an agreement between the Co-operative Union and the W.E.A.—an agreement which excludes the N.C.L.C. This is the more surprising since the Co-operative Educational Movement had a representative on the Advisory Committee of the General Council which drew up the T.U.C. Scheme. One would have assumed that this implied that the Co-operative Union were prepared to fall in with whatever arrangements were made under that Scheme ; and to act in the same way as Congress itself acted. If not, and if their “status” was merely that of an individual Trade Union—holding itself free to make arrangements with either of the two educational organisations concerned in the Scheme—then surely they were not entitled to representation on the Advisory Committee.

We give below a letter sent to the *Co-operative News*, and we hope that the many Co-operator-supporters of the N.C.L.C. will see that the matter is thoroughly discussed :—

TO THE EDITOR, *The Co-operative News*
WORKERS' EDUCATION

DEAR SIR,—With reference to the reports that are being published in your paper of Joint Conferences being held by the Co-operative Union and the W.E.A., may I say that the many Co-operators who support the National Council of Labour Colleges are considerably concerned about this latest development?

Those who have followed Trade Union history closely during the past two or three years know that the W.E.A. and its educational policy have rapidly lost ground in the Trade Union Movement in relation to the unparalleled success of the National Council of Labour Colleges and Independent Working-Class Education. In these circumstances one can understand that the W.E.A. is endeavouring to make up for its lack of success in the Trade Union Movement by hitching its wagon on to the Co-operative Movement. Independent Working-Class Education, however, has supporters in the Co-operative Movement as well as in the Trade Union Movement, and many Co-operators are asking why it is that the Co-operative Union has entered into a joint arrangement with the W.E.A. and not with the N.C.L.C.

It is true that at the Conferences being held, the N.C.L.C.

is told by the speakers that it is doing good work and that the Co-operative Movement is quite in sympathy with this work. But kind words butter no parsnips, and the fact remains that the N.C.L.C. has received no communication from the Co-operative Union suggesting a meeting to discuss joint working.

In order that misunderstandings may be avoided the N.C.L.C. is writing the Co-operative Union with a view to discussing the position.

Yours faithfully,

J. P. M. MILLAR

(General Secretary, N.C.L.C.).

TWO PLEBS PAMPHLETS

Banks— & Bulgaria

NOW'S the time, during the summer months, to do a bit of pushing for the "Plebs Idea." Two pamphlets we have just issued—on widely different and yet closely related subjects—will help you to introduce our movement to new comrades.

The first is Arthur Woodburn's *The Banks and the Workers* (24 pp., 4d.).

Following a well-known example, Woodburn speaks to us in this pamphlet in a parable. Those who heard him at Cober Hill will not only get this treatment of the very important matter of bankers' credit for themselves, but we hope will get at least a dozen for distribution. With so much talk in Socialist circles about "ironing out the trade cycles" by control over credit, and with so much nonsense being talked by those who regard the banker as the sole villain of the play who can be removed and still leave profit, capital and wages untouched—this elementary explanation is extremely useful, and we hope our readers will secure for it a wide circulation. Woodburn starts from the Labour Theory of value and examines the problem of bankers' credit as part and parcel of the capitalist system.

The other pamphlet is a reprint of C. L. Malone's article last month on *Bulgaria*. This, we think our readers will agree, well deserved re-issue in pamphlet form, and we trust they will see to it that its contents are brought to the notice of as many Labour folk as possible. For the moment, events in China have overshadowed the Bulgarian situation ; but it is up to all of us who want, in Malone's

words, "an end to the age-long employment of the Balkan nations as the puppets of international finance," to see that the facts about Bulgaria are given full publicity.

Push these pamphlets and help to counteract Boss Press propaganda.

REVIEWS

THE LEFT WING

Problems of the Labour Movement.

By P. Braun (*Labour Monthly* Office, 2d.).

ONE must read this pamphlet, to understand it properly, in conjunction with "An Open Letter to G. Lansbury" in the *Sunday Worker* by the same writer, and with certain leading articles in the *Sunday Worker* and the *Workers' Weekly*. The pamphlet is part of a campaign. If that campaign is honestly meant to lead up to a unification of the Left Wing then it is useful. If it is only intended as advertising propaganda for one particular party, then it is not.

Is the pamphlet itself worth all the stress laid on it? A. J. Cook's statement in the preface that it "brings home to us in a forceful manner the questions that must be dealt with" is quite true, though it doesn't do much to bring home the answers to those questions. Of the preface, one can only say that Cook is a busy man and the preface proves it. It does little more than give the pamphlet the advertising power of Cook's name.

P. Braun—whoever he may be—has taken upon himself the role of Guide, Philosopher and Friend to the Left Wing; so he must expect some rude remarks. The British habit of shouting "There's hair" or "Where did you get that hat" on solemn occasions is a surface manifestation of something that goes very deep in British natures. If P. Braun is to direct us, he will need to be as wise as a serpent.

He starts out by taking Purcell's description of our movement as a "mosaic," and proceeds to show that this "mosaic" character not only proves our backwardness but prevents

us from fighting effectively. Both statements may be true, but the "mosaic" is a fact and we have to take that fact into account. When Braun says in italics "The chief problem before the Labour Movement at the present time is just this: to re-equip itself for battle in accordance with the requirements of the new situation," then one is driven to reply that one of "the requirements of the new situation" is that the "mosaic" should be very carefully studied and great care exercised in drawing up any policy which has to appeal to all parts of it. Which is why the task can hardly be done for us by outsiders—even if they come bringing a solution of our problems on tables of stone.

Braun divides his pamphlet under five heads.

First comes International Trade Union Unity. He admits that an Anglo-Russian agreement can only be reached if we soberly estimate all the difficulties confronting us. Those difficulties will undoubtedly be made almost insuperable if by word or deed, at the present critical time, negotiations are made to look like wire-pulling by any one group in the Left Wing. That there is genuine desire among the mass of the workers for inter-communication with the Russian workers is a fact (*cf.* the Labour Women's Conference at Birmingham); but that unity, again, must come from the working masses organised in their "mosaic." And here it may be as well to relate the pamphlet to those other links in the chain, especially a leader in the *Workers' Weekly* signed "C. M. R." It is a fact that at the present time the Communist Party is the least competent authority to speak for the "mosaic" as a whole; not because it is theoretically wrong (I believe the contrary) but because practically and realistically that Party,

as a party, has not yet won the confidence of the working classes in this country. It has the support of many hard-working enthusiasts (whose example and work have saved it again and again), it has good men and women leaders; but whether because of mistaken tactics, youthful rashness, or just plain thickheadedness, it has failed to win the support of the masses. It is true the C.P. is only once mentioned in Braun's pamphlet, but the implication throughout—especially when we take the chain of articles together—is that the C.P. is the sole and only source of reason, knowledge, common-sense and fighting spirit in the class war! In Yorkshire this sort of attitude is summed up in a saying which runs:—"God bless me and my wife's husband, not forgetting mysen!" I respectfully suggest that one big move forward will be made when we all realise that there is common-sense, reason, knowledge and fighting spirit, good fighting spirit, in all parts of the mosaic.

Discussing Unity with the Colonies, Braun writes, "Our Left Wing elements except the Communists [my wife's husband again] have hitherto *not bothered* to work out their definite attitude to this burning question of our daily lives." I deny this. We in the I.W.C.E. movement have stressed this point again and again in our classes on Economic Geography and Imperialism. Lansbury may have made a mistake in supporting Das, but Lansbury is a human being and did not spring perfect from the head of Jove (which is why hundreds of the workers are prepared to follow him). His mistakes are such that any of us might make. I know little about the I.L.P., but surely E. D. Morel and other I.L.P. fighters fought for years for this "definite attitude." Whole sections of our movement are quite united about this. But if the C.P. tactic is to say always of any definite policy "We invented that—that's ours alone," then someone has to point to the years of propaganda done before the Russian Revolution. Let us realise that our harvest can only come now because of the spadework of other comrades.

In his third section on Unity of the British Trade Unions, Braun advocates

the formation of factory committees set up "on the initiative of the Trade Councils with the backing of the General Council." Now factory committees look well on paper, but I have never heard a really satisfactory answer to the objection made by a keen and class conscious worker, that in actual practice such committees merely enable the boss more easily to spot and get rid of the active men or women in his employ.

With his fourth point I disagree again. The Labour Party is not yet an "organised impotence"—whatever it may become. And when Braun, in his indignation at the chicanery and dodging of the Right Wing, suggests that the right tactics after the last General Election would have been to demand (a) the dissolution of Parliament and (b) the bringing to trial of all those who participated in the Red Letter plot, one can only remark that this would have been just about as effective as throwing one's cap at a train.

Then on the question of a more definite and virile connection between the Labour Party and the Trade Unions, he naively suggests that the first great task should be to get the withdrawal of the exceptional laws against Communists. Well, there are many things that the big Unions may do, but that is hardly likely to be the first of them. Surely this demand will have to come from Labour Party branches where rank-and-file Communists have proved themselves useful, sensible and trusted workers. The second suggestion under this heading is certainly more practical. Trade Unionists finding big capitalists in the ranks of the Labour Party have certainly good grounds for kicking. If you are an underpaid biscuit maker, it is annoying to find Sir James Puntley or Sir William Harmer in your Labour Party branch, and to see them dining and wineing your leaders on surplus value extracted from your labour! This strikes me as a live issue; the other is unimportant to the average Trade Unionist—whatever it may be to the C.P.

With the concluding paragraph of this section about the necessity for a Left *bloc* one can agree, with one reservation. This Left *bloc* must be

as solid as it is possible to make it. Criticism of each other is good in many ways, but slinging names like "deserter" and "renegade" about is to arouse feelings that may wreck attempts at unity. To use the same language when speaking of dissentients from the C.P. like Postgate, Ellen Wilkinson, John Jagger, and Phillips Price, as one does when referring to Right Wing fakirs is to write oneself down a numskull and to bring into disrepute as a stupid, vain-glorious and disagreeable set of folk, the Party one belongs to.

Isn't it time our slogans included "Watch your step" as well as "Watch your leaders"? Let's waste less time in stopping to hoot.

The last section, on The Press, is very barren. It attacks the *Herald*, stresses the fact (known to all) that the capitalist Sunday papers have a bigger circulation than our own, and implies that we are waiting for some "perfect" workers' papers. Is that helpful? I think not.

We have two new papers, *Lansbury's Weekly* and the *Sunday Worker*, and the circulation of each would scarcely have been thought credible a year ago. Add to these the *New Leader*, with all its faults (it is an official organ) and the *Workers' Weekly*, with all its faults (it is an official organ), and we surely need not be pessimistic about our Workers' Press.

To conclude: I take it that Braun, and the Communist Party generally, put a fighting working-class before anything else. If that is our aim then we have all got to contribute something and to sacrifice something. If the C.P. will sacrifice its monopoly of all the virtues, it has much to contribute. Then perhaps the I.L.P. may show more of the fighting spirit of Keir Hardie—even perhaps to defy its leaders, and ordinary Labour Party members will then begin to see that what matters is not your label but what you are willing to contribute to the fight.

What we need as much as a policy is real comradeship. Is that utterly impossible? When shall we have our first meeting of representatives of all sections of our mosaic?

WINIFRED HERRABIN.

LIKE THE CURATE'S EGG

The Marxian Economic Handbook and Glossary. By W. H. Emmett (Allen and Unwin, 12s. 6d.).

This book, whose object is to simplify the reading of Marx, Vol. I, may be divided into three parts. The preface is a criticism of the way Marx's works are understood and taught (the S.L.P. comes in for a slating here); the body is made up of the condensation, while the third part is a glossary of terms and translations of the many foreign phrases used by Marx.

This last part is indeed well done, and should prove exceedingly useful to serious students, say those entering the London Labour College. Of the rest more has to be said.

It seems that the greatest value of the many condensations and summaries of Marx is that they display a capacity for grinding work on the part of their writers. Apart from this there is little advantage. Why can't these "hard-baked" Marxians realise that in the process of shrinking the body the soul is lost, for without Marx's own ironies, satires, strength, yes, even his repetitions, his ideas are lifeless and almost meaningless?

It is Marx's way of getting at truth that counts, not so much his conclusions, and in a summary this is what is lost. This is why *applications* of Marx, such as The PLEBS Economics Textbook and Bogdanoff's book, are of greater service for the understanding both of Marx and of economic life as it is, than all the *simplifications* ever written.

The book under review is the product of a verbalist (though a teacher of Marxism in Australia), a species not confined to Bible students. The reader is told that Vol. I. is full of mistakes made by translators, printers and others. Would you believe it, on page 166 (Swan Sonn.)? "value" is mentioned nine times correctly and once incorrectly as "exchange-value!" Outrageous! that vandals (you can bet they were S.L.P.ers) should spoil "Marx's majestic progressive order" and "the wonderful but very simple grandeur" And Mr. John De Georke in *Taxation* (S.L.P.) dares to belittle the importance of taxation so far as the workers are concerned,

when in the holy book (page 781), it is laid down explicitly that it has a "destructive influence" upon them.

These little criticisms show up a quality far too common among Marxians to-day, a quality that leads them to try to explain Marx instead of investigating present economic problems. The awful result of this is the man who knows Vol. I. almost by heart, and nothing at all of the effects of the Dawes Plan upon the English workers. As the Plebs movement expands and through Trade Union Education Schemes caters for the class-conscious instruction of the bulk of the rank and file workers, Marxians will be compelled to be more practical, and offer something better than chunks of theory.

A Plebeian with 12s. 6d. to spare can do much worse than buy this book, provided he has already read Marx pretty thoroughly. But, let it not be pressed too much on a recent convert, for it smacks of the heaviness of Marx's own product, and bears the additional weight of cross references.

F. P.

THE PASTON LETTERS

The Paston Letters (Everyman Library, J. M. Dent, 2 vols., 4s.).

This is a cheap edition of the well-known family letters written at various dates from 1435 to 1506. They are of interest to two types of readers: (1) those who like to find in history details of the ordinary domestic lives, loves, quarrels and incomes of their ancestors, in this case their noble ancestors, and (2) those who wish to supplement a general knowledge of contemporary social and economic conditions by concrete illustrations drawn from original sources. Amongst worker-students the latter type is more common; for if we want to study human nature we can do it better in modern fiction and biographical literature, free from mere antiquarian frills, not to speak of newspaper reports of the law courts in the case of our noble families.

But it cannot be said that the present edition of the Paston Letters is of much use as a living background to economic studies. Letters described as being of less importance are represented only by inadequate *précis*, and it is only too clear that many documents

of interest to students of manorial organisation and villeinage have been omitted, in order to make room for love-letters and such like. Some letters illustrating borrowing and lending, however, have been printed in full, and show vividly the great extent of petty credit transactions during the later middle ages. The index, moreover, is good, and should prove a useful guide to those who wish to go through the volumes.

J. L. G.

FOR MATHEMATICIANS

The History of Mathematics. By J. W. N. Sullivan (World's Manuals; Oxford University Press, 2s. 6d.).

The aptitude for mathematical study crops out in some men and women of every class and degree of education, and it waits for development. If you have that aptitude you are indeed fortunate, for mathematical exercises are the most thrilling of all kinds of intellectual activity. You can practise them without adventurous aids—in a monastic or a prison cell. You don't even need paper and pencil—you only have to think. Perhaps there are such fortunate people among PLEBS readers; if so they will find this little book on the history of mathematics in Europe one which is altogether attractive both with regard to its matter and its style.

J. J.

MORE UNITY WANTED

Third Year-Book of the International Federation of Trade Unions, 1925 (International Federation of Trade Unions, Amsterdam, 550 pages, 10s.).

This may be said to be the most complete handbook of the international trade union movement ever issued.

It states that at the end of 1923 there were affiliated to the Federation twenty-three Trade Union centres, comprising 835 organisations with a total membership of 15,321,692. In regard to 14,687,145 members out of this total, the sex is reported, so that we find that of this number 12,507,426 (85.2 per cent.) are men and 2,179,719 (14.8 per cent.) women.

A detailed table setting out the various orientations in the trade union movement states that the total number of organised workers at the end of 1923 amounted to 36,439,320. Out of this total, 16,490,121 workers adopted the platform of the International Federation of Trade Unions, while 5,245,889 (principally in Russia) were affiliated to the Communist, 2,354,583 to the Clerical and 404,700 to the Syndicalist trade union movements. The remaining 11,970,027 take a neutral standpoint. These figures offer startling evidence in favour of the T.U.C.'s move towards International Unity.

From a survey of the number of organised workers in each country, compared with the population figures it appears, *inter alia*, that in Austria out of every 100 inhabitants, seventeen are trade unionists; next on the list is Germany, with 15.3 per cent., then follows England (13.3 per cent.), Australia (12 per cent.), Czechoslovakia (11.1 per cent.), and Belgium (9.9 per cent.). The following countries are among those where the trade union movement is so far very little developed: Argentine, Finland, Bulgaria, Portugal, Yugoslavia, Peru, Roumania, South Africa, Brazil, Japan, India (British Empire), Dutch East Indies, Egypt and China. In all these countries not more than 1.5 per cent. of the population are organised workers.

The *Year Book* is indispensable to all libraries catering for working-class students.

J. P. M. M.

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH THE I.L.P.?

Education for Socialists: Study Circles and How to Form Them (I.L.P., 2d.).

This 12 pp. pamphlet is "prepared for the I.L.P. by the I.L.P. Information Committee." The last three pages are all about Ruskin College. There is no mention anywhere of the N.C.L.C.—its classes or its correspondence courses. Apparently, the Information Committee would be none the worse for a little information on this point. Or can it be that it is in possession of such information, but does not consider it expedient to pass it on to I.L.P.ers?

H.

ANOTHER PROPHET

Quo Vadimus? Glimpses of the Future.
By E. E. Fournier D'Albe (Kegan Paul, 2s. 6d.).

There is an amazing amount of nonsense mixed with some fascinating suggestions about the world a thousand and a million years hence in this slight essay of 92 small pages. Economics cannot be seriously discussed with a person who regards a squirrel as the arch-capitalist, and the workers' clothes, boots and muscles as capital. It is to be hoped that his view of the future is more reliable than his ideas of the present—in which the worker drives a "bloated wage" and "often drives a car while his employer goes by train"!

A hundred years hence work will be done by the electric wand; people in improved clothes will live in cottages with translucent walls and spread over the countryside; babies will be hatched in incubators (ectogenesis is the high-brow name for the process); television will supplement telephony and radio activity will remove the fear of the world becoming cold and lifeless.

Politically, the British and Japanese Empires will unite with the French and American Republics as the nucleus of a world federation. "The transport of goods and passengers will rapidly gain in speed, comfort, and safety until the whole earth becomes accessible to all . . . and also habitable. The tropics, the original cradle of the human race, will once more be reclaimed from our most formidable enemies of the insect world and the ever-present bacterium. . . . There will of course be an international auxiliary language understood everywhere."

In a thousand years the globe will be "laid out like a huge garden with a climate under perfect control; the internal heat of the earth brought to the surface and utilised as a source of never-failing energy; portions of the interior of the earth reclaimed and made habitable; all machinery and sources of power wisely distributed and made instantly available." A world outlook will prevail and in a million years the world citizens may be taking precautions against celestial collisions or migrating to another planet.

The author's remarks on education are interesting. "There is still too

much of the methods of the pump about our education. The idea seems to be that the teacher draws from the well of knowledge and administers copious draughts to his pupils, and when they have swallowed these they are educated. . . . The University lecture is, of all methods of imparting knowledge, about the least effective. The student sits in a stiff attitude and maintains a pose of strained attention. He endeavours to keep his mind concentrated on the words and meaning of the professor. Every now and then he succeeds but then his thoughts persist in following their own train of associations and the thread is broken. He jots down disconnected notes hoping to piece them together afterwards. This piecing together is often the only process which really advances his knowledge. It brings his own will-power and faculties into action. The lecture only requires will-power for concentration on somebody else's thought, and this effort is negative and sterile.

"If lectures must be, then they should be interrupted after every ten minutes or so. The lecturer should then sit down and invite and encourage his students to ask pertinent questions or advance sound criticism."

M. S.

THE POPULATION PROBLEM
Population. By A. M. Carr-Saunders
(World's Manuals. Oxford University Press, 2s. 6d.).

This is an excellent volume in a good series. It is free from the aggressively capitalist individualism which often characterises studies of the population problem, and is particularly valuable for its discussion of the "fringes" of a problem which has a good many fringes. For instance, the author sees that *overcrowding* has to be considered, quite apart from the *economics* of the population problem. "It may be that the increase of population beyond a certain point will render healthy social life impossible. It is possible that, while the crowding of people together might bring good results as far as the production of wealth was concerned, these good results might be more than counter-balanced by the evils which overcrowding would cause in other aspects of life" (p. 67). The author is an all-round thinker, although those whose outlook is fundamentally working class will differ from him on certain points, and wish to correct him on others. He is sound on birth control. A really good half-crown's worth.

E. AND C. P.

New "Plebs" Pamphlet

THE BANKS & THE WORKERS

By Arthur Woodburn (Edinburgh
District, Scottish Lab. Coll.)

24 pp. Pictorial cover. Price 4d.

Per 12, postpaid 3s. 3d.

This pamphlet is an expansion of the articles contributed by Com. Woodburn to *The PLEBS* last year under the title "Banks and Tanks." It explains the mechanism of Banks and Banking in simple terms and from the working-class point of view. It will form an admirable introductory 'textbook-in-little' for Economics Classes

PLEBS, 162a Buckingham Palace Road, London, S.W.1.

NOT GOOD ENOUGH

An *Outline of Ancient History*. By Mary Agnes Hamilton and the Rev. A. W. F. Blunt (Oxford University Press, 3s.).

The pictures in this book are interesting, and the Vicar of St. Werburgh's is good in a chatty way in dealing with Egypt and Assyria. But the bulk of the book is nearly as bad as it can be—it is a jejune, ill-written and unoriginal recapitulation of the orthodox textbook matter on Greece and Rome. Legend and history are ignorantly mixed up, and later study on the economic side almost wholly ignored. It should be added (whether as an excuse or aggravation of the offence I don't know) that this part is an unchanged reprint of an out-of-date pot boiler. It will probably be highly prized by the W.E.A.

R. W. P.

A NEW "RESEARCH" MONTHLY

Labour Bulletin of Industrial and Political Information (Labour Joint Research and Information Department, 33, Eccleston Square, S.W. 1. Monthly, 3d.).

This new publication certainly lends point to Postgate's plea (in *Lansbury's Weekly*, June 20th), for a unified Research and Education Department under the T.U.C. We can do with any number of *Bulletins* and *Circulars* of this kind; but there is bound to be

unnecessary overlapping, and consequent waste of time and energy, so long as they are issued from separate centres. Centralisation ought at any rate to be discussed.

FOR REFERENCE

One naturally turns first in any year* book to the department in which one is chiefly interested, and *The Socialist Annual* (I.L.P., 2s. 6d.) gives the N.C.L.C. address incorrectly. Despite such a bad beginning, we found therein useful summaries of State and municipal activity, profits, concentration of capital, etc. There is also no attempt to play the ostrich in the directory concerning the Communist Internationals.

The Labour Year Book, 1925 (Eccleston Square, 3s. 6d. paper, 5s. cloth) gives an address for *The Plebs* which has been out of date for some years. Such small inaccuracies set one wondering whether the rest of the material has been as carelessly revised; but, so far as we have been able to test it elsewhere, the *Year Book* is a fairly complete and reliable summary of the facts about the British Labour movement and its activities. The section on "Workers' Education" is badly arranged. Surely the account of the T.U.C. negotiations should have come first, and been followed by the reports of the two organisations which have taken part therein.

"The A.B.C. of the International"

EVERY day the workers' struggle tends more and more to be carried on on the international field. The operations of international trusts controlling the people's food and attacking the workers' standard of life, the activities of international financiers and armament rings, and the arrangement of pacts by reactionary

Governments, make international defensive action on the part of the workers imperative. To avoid the intensified horrors of new wars, the peoples of the earth must more and more learn to co-operate. Misunderstanding and national prejudices must be cleared away by the realisation of the fact that the workers in every country have to

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deal with the same problems and the same enemy.

Since that splendid endeavour of the First International in 1864, repeated attempts have been made to unite the workers of the world. Many of the barriers to fraternity between the peoples are disappearing. The aeroplane and wireless telephony ignore national boundaries and complete the linking-up of the world begun by the locomotive, the steamship, and the electric cable. For good or ill, every part of the world is interdependent. But there remains the barrier of barriers—diversity of speech. Language is the chief means by which human co-operation is possible, and the absence of a common language among the workers of the world is a very great barrier to widespread international co-operation. The workers in the mass have not the time or energy to become polyglots. For that matter, there is no reason why they should attempt the task, as there is a simpler and better way. Let each national section of the world's working class make use of an auxiliary language for international use. Already Esperanto, which is simple and neutral alike for all nationalities, has stood the test of over thirty years' use, and has shown that it can assist the expression of the solidarity

of Labour. Believing as we do that international understanding among the common people is necessary, that Esperanto, while promoting it, would greatly facilitate the work of international bodies, and specially the work of their congresses, and that the workers, by correspondence and travel, would be enabled by means of Esperanto to acquire an international outlook and establish ties of friendship abroad, we welcome the progress of the international language movement and hope that Esperanto will become a recognised part of all working-class educational programmes and that more and more workers will make use of it. By the widespread use of the international language the "A.B.C. of the International" as Henry Barbusse has called Esperanto, the workers would obtain the international vision without which the world will perish.

Signed:—C. Roden Buxton (I.L.P.); H. H. Elvin (N.U.C.); Alex. Gossip (N.A.F.T.A.); C. T. Cramp (N.U.R.); J. W. Bowen, (U.P.W.); G. Hicks (A.U.B.T.W.); A. J. Cook (M.F.G.B.); Robt. Williams (Manager *Daily Herald*); Frank Hodges; Robert Smillie, M.P.; Tom Mann; A. B. Swales (President, British S.T.U.C.); Geo. Lansbury, M.P.; Margaret G. Bondfield; Ellen C. Wilkinson, M.P.; S. Saklatvala, M.P.

TROTSKY'S "COMRADES"

THE *Labour Monthly* of June published an article by R. P. Dutt explaining loftily that Eastman's book on Trotsky was not Marxist because it indulged in personalities. (Dutt's reading of Marx cannot be very extensive!)

In another part of the same issue it published a violent personal attack by W. N. Ewer on J. F. Horrabin and myself; and an article by "P. Braun" (since issued as a pamphlet) which also contained abuse of me.

There is a good deal to be said for leaving this sort of thing alone. Mere abuse, and dirty controversial methods, in a way answer themselves. Ewer, for example, starts off with a quotation from a private conversation, over a year old, which he has polished up and published in the hope of scoring a point against Horrabin and, I suppose, making bad blood between Horrabin and myself.

But it is a mistake to leave it unanswered. People read it and say "Of course, this is pretty obviously prejudiced—but there may be something in what the man says—anyway, there's been no reply to it"; and so the mud sticks. And as Horrabin and I are both prominently associated with the movement for which THE PLEBS stands, a reply in these columns will not be out of place. (Besides, if we send our replies elsewhere they will probably be cut about or excluded; the *Labour Monthly* has declined to print replies from Plebs before.)

Ewer is vicious against us both because we dared to defend Trotsky. I have a certain sympathy for him—he rallied instantly to the order of the machine and wrote the now notorious review in the *Daily Herald*, where he called his fellow Communist a "senile colonel gabbling in an arm-chair." This was in an anti-Communist paper, by the way. Then, almost before the ink was dry, Trotsky was reappointed to most important posts, and Ewer has had publicly to eat his words. He can't turn on his superior, so he works off his humiliated feelings on

us! And it is true that the Comintern officials have treated him with an almost excessive disregard. In this very article that I am answering he explains lordily that it is just like a Cabinet disagreement: a man could not be allowed in the Cabinet after writing like Trotsky, etc., etc. In the interval between this being written and printed, he has had in the *Daily Herald* to chronicle Trotsky's appointment to posts "which are equivalent to Cabinet rank." Poor lamb! He ought not to be held up to ridicule like this; after all, they should remember he was doing his best.

Well, he has answered himself on that point. His next point is simply the assertion that we left the British Party in pique and hoped Trotsky would do the same with the Russian party. Every reader of *Lansbury's Weekly*, who saw my article, knows this is false. There is no more important thing than the strengthening of the Russian Revolution, and the Russian C.P. is its chief defence. If I were in Russia, I should certainly be in the C.P. For over there it is a serious party, the mainstay of the revolution, expressing the desires of the conscious proletariat. It is its chosen and tried defence, and it is at least roughly true to say that on its side are the workers, and those who are opposed to it are the workers' enemies. Are any of these things true of the British Communist Party? The question has only to be asked for the answer to be a shout of laughter. The parallel is absurd.

Ewer, foreign editor of an anti-Communist paper, in whose columns he abuses a fellow Communist, is good enough to insinuate that I change my opinion "at a word of command." I am not sure what he means, but I fear I must grant him first place here. I have not even learnt the trick of writing attacks in the *Labour Monthly* over pen names on my colleagues. No, in the matter of a slick and servile pen, I cannot pretend to compete with him.

So much for him. "P. Braun" is a simpler phenomenon: the ordinary dirt-slinger. Inquiry fails to reveal anything about "P. Braun," and it seems that, according to Party practice, this is a false name. It is wiser, you know, for people sometimes lose their tempers and even visit an office and kick their traducers in the backside or take other petty bourgeois action.

"P. Braun" manages to hint that I supported trade union unity "only in March, when the wind began blowing very strong in favour." You see the innuendo?—that I opposed until I felt it safe to go with the stream. I will not bother to answer it.

Then he rehashes and distorts the disagreement between *Lansbury's Weekly* and the *Sunday Worker*. The *Weekly* had demanded that the British workers should force the Government to accept any overtures from the Indian Swarajists. "I am not at all inclined to blame Lansbury for this," smirks "P. Braun" with the air of one in the know; "the lines to the greater glory of Das were obviously written by the hand of a renegade." Poor chap! for in point of fact G. L. wrote that note with his own hand! However, since "P. Braun" says so, no doubt the British workers will now realise that G. L. is a renegade.

I had thought of replying to "P. Braun's" last phrases in which he describes me as a "professional deserter," "harmful," "most dangerous," and so on. But I think that those who have followed what I have done will not want me to answer such phrases: those who believe them will not attend to any answer. As for those who know nothing of the matter, I only ask them to observe that the man does not even sign his real name.

I end with one quotation to show how incredibly silly the policy of these people is. It is about the I.L.P. conference:

"An honest political party of the working class should have demanded: (a) the dissolution of Parliament; (b) the bringing to trial of all those who participated in the Red Letter plot. . . . Such demands would have political sense."

What on earth would have been the

use of passing such resolutions? If this is political sense, what is political idiocy?

RAYMOND W. POSTGATE.

THE April *Labour Monthly* contained a review by W. N. Ewer of Trotsky's book on Lenin, which was described as consisting of "pathetically feeble gossip," and its author labelled "a vain, garrulous tattler."

Whereupon I remarked in The PLEBS ("Bookshelf," May number) that it was rather comic that—before the Communist Party ukase went forth against Trotsky—a chapter of this "pathetically feeble" book was published in the *Labour Monthly*, and indeed "featured" as a star contribution.

This still seems to me to deserve some explanation. Ewer, in his article on "Trotsky and His 'Friends'" in the June *L.M.*, doesn't refer to it; which from a controversialist's point of view was perhaps wise of him.

Instead, with much play of irony, he labels me "Trotskyist," and does his best to corral me with the "disgruntled Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, S.R.s, monarchists, and Tsarist intriguers" who wanted to use Trotsky in order to "break the Russian Communist Party." May I disclaim any such melodramatic ambition? I aimed at nothing more than pointing out how smartly some people can "right about face" in the interests of "discipline." In short, I was writing about Ewer; and only incidentally about Trotsky at all.

There are two points in Ewer's article on which I would like to comment:—

He drags in "Dot and Carrie." This, of course, isn't being personal, because as he and all his colleagues tell us when discussing "Trotskyism," Marxism doesn't deal in personalities; and Ewer is a Marxist. But may I inquire of him, with all due restraint, just what the way in which he or I earn our livings under capitalism has to do with a discussion of our attitude or actions as Socialists?

Second, he says I "resigned in pique from the British Party." He is misinformed. I resigned, quite deliberately, because the British Party chose, equally deliberately, to act in a manner calculated to injure a move

ment they were professing to support—the movement for Independent Working-Class Education; and because it, or its officials, made it abundantly clear that it was only prepared to observe agreements, with individuals or with organisations, when it suited

its own purposes to do so. As I can't work happily with little Machiavelians of this type, I decided I should feel better outside.

Ewer's essay in controversy doesn't incline me to change my mind.

J. F. HERRIN.

NOTES BY THE WAY

Finance and Imperialism

The following account by Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, in his *Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt* of the part played by the Rothschilds (who had invested capital in the Suez Canal) in the deposition of the former ruler of Egypt, the Khedive Ismail, by the British in 1879, is well worth preserving. It could well be inscribed on one of the blank pages of the Imperialism textbook:—

"Wilson (former financial adviser to the Khedive) on his return from Egypt, had gone straight to the Rothschilds at Paris, and had represented to them the danger their money was running from the turn affairs had taken at Cairo and Alexandria. The Khedive intended to repudiate his whole debt and to shelter himself in so doing by proclaiming constitutional government in Egypt. He thus succeeded in alarming the Rothschilds and in getting them to use *the immense political influence they possessed* in favour of active intervention. At first, however, they had pulled the strings both at Downing Street and on the Quai d'Orsay in vain. . . . In despair for their millions, the Rothschilds then made supplication at Berlin to Bismarck. . . . The French and English governments were given to understand by the then all-powerful Chancellor that if they were unable to intervene effectively in Egypt in the bondholders' interests the German Government would make their cause its own. This settled the matter, and it was agreed that, as the least violent form of intervention, the Sultan (of Turkey) should be applied to, to depose his too recalcitrant vassal" (pp. 49-50).

Perhaps one day we shall also see written "The Secret History of the Occupation of China"!

A Timely Syllabus.

Money and Prices, by M. H. Dobb (L.R.D. Syllabus Series, No. 16, 6d.), is a useful description of the rise of the modern money and credit mechanism, including a fuller explanation of the Theory of Purchasing Power Parities than was possible in *The Plebs Outline of Economics*. As it was written before the British return to the free export of gold, and the ending of the war-time nominal convertibility of the Fisher currency note, it dates a little already, but all the reasons behind that development are well summarised. There are four minor points of improvement we would suggest: a reference especially for N.C.L.C. students in the first Section to the *value* beneath its price expression; the inclusion of currency inflation with credit and capital inflation treated in Section 6, as the Moscow and German examples quoted in that section were largely the result of that factor, which is now treated separately in Section 8 on *The Breakdown of the Credit System*; the recognition (contrary to p. 4) that the worker under inflation is not so helpless as the rentier and the people with fixed incomes because he can obtain a higher price for his labour-power; the replacement (pp. 25, 26) of the word "*value* of gold" by "*purchasing power*" because the exchange value of gold is determined not by purchasing power parities of U.S. or any other currency, but by the socially necessary labour time needed to reproduce it. But these are minor blemishes on a useful and timely effort which, with A. Woodburn's pamphlet, will be of great assistance to our classes in making themselves informed on a topical and important question.

"Symbolic" Architecture

A very odd proposal is revealed in Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution* (Allen and Unwin, 8s. 6d., pp. 246). It appears that a distinguished architect named Tatlin has put forward a plan for housing the Council of Commissars, the Comintern, and so forth, in a great symbolic building. Reasons of expense have forced an adjournment of its adoption. The building is to consist of gigantic props and piles on which will rest a great glass cylinder and a glass pyramid. These will rotate slowly and steadily and within them will sit the Comintern executive. Trotsky discusses this proposal with deep seriousness and decides that he can see no reason why the executive should sit in a rotating glass cylinder. Perhaps the idea of the glass is that the eyes of all the world are deemed to be on them. But why rotating, like a squirrel's cage? Of course, you could measure the length of speeches by the number of rotations.

"Comrade Zinovieff spoke for the space of 147 revolutions." Somehow, however, it seems as though somebody's leg had been pulled very successfully.

AFTER HEARING A. A. PURCELL'S DESCRIPTION OF THE BAKU OILFIELDS

Oil from Baku,
Oil, sister, oil
Bought those fine ropes of pearls,
Coil upon coil.

Ten feet of bare brown earth
For those who toil,
With four dark walls around
Reeking of oil.

Oil from Baku,
Sweat, blood and toil
Bought those fine ropes of pearls!
Do you recoil?

LEONORA THOMAS.

MARKED PASSAGES

WAR GRAVES

(After the Lacedæmonian).

Tell the Professors, you that pass us by,
They taught Political Economy,
And here, obedient to its laws, we lie.

GODFREY ELTON, *Years of Peace*.

PROLETARIAN PROVERB

In Onion there is Strength.

(Anon.)

MAY BE USED IN PEACE-TIME TOO!

Fivepence-halfpenny:—Something not visible; not there. A derisive term among men at the Front referring to the Government messing allowance. To supplement the men's rations, drawn in kind by Quartermasters, an expenditure of 5½d. a day was allowed, to be laid out at the Quartermaster's discretion. As the money was never actually seen by the soldier the phrase "fivepence-halfpenny" came to be used as a sort of by-word.

FRASER & GIBBONS, *Soldier and Sailor Words and Phrases*.

Imperialism as seen by a Diplomatist

It is one of the evils of the English Imperialist system that it cannot meddle anywhere among free people, even with quite innocent intentions, without in the end doing evil. There are too many selfish interests always at work not to turn the best beginnings into ill endings.

—Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *The Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt*, 46.

When Imperialism is not Imperialism
—when seen by a Labour "idealist"

"We look to Wembley, not as an advertising stunt for profiteers, but as a concrete embodiment of that vast Empire we call British. . . . Labour made Wembley. . . . Labour keeps Wembley. . . . The workers of Britain were and are the true Empire builders. . . . (By Wembley) the eyes of thousands of school children have been opened to the vast implications of Wembley. . . . There is an Imperialism that is only another word

for exploitation. There is a deeper, more lasting, Imperialism than that, based on the idea of federation. It is not 'grasping,' it is 'giving.' . . . It carries to the uttermost parts of the earth a civilisation built through nine long centuries—notions of justice and fair play that seem like lasting."

—Ben C. Spoor, M.P., Chief Whip, Parliamentary Labour Party in *Cambridge Daily News*, June 11th, 1925.

LETTERS

ITALIAN SOCIALISM

DEAR EDITOR,—May I point out to your readers—in view of certain recent contributions—that Serrati did not *just walk out* of the Italian Socialist Party into the Communist Party there. As I stated in *The PLEBS* months ago, Serrati *was expelled* from the Socialist Party. He was expelled from that Party in August, 1923—along with Buffoni, Riboldi and Maffi—for his connection with the editorship of the "dissident" journal *Pagine Rosse*. Before me lies the issue of that paper of 25th August, 1923, in which the protests of several branches of the Socialist Party against these expulsions are published in full.

Personally I would expel Serrati from EVERY workers' party in Europe. He and D'Aragona are two of the greatest humbugs (from the working-class point of view) that have ever misled a Labour movement. Some of your readers who also read the *Glasgow Forward* may remember that nearly five years ago there I expressed the view that these two individuals were leading the Italian Socialist Party "up the garden"—they have successfully done so.

Yours faithfully,
A. P. L.

N.C.L.C. TUTORS AND THE W.E.A.

DEAR SIR,—I can assure Mr. Maxwell that I had the terms of his letter to the Glasgow W.E.A. fully and clearly in my mind when I wrote. The Branch Council interpreted the letter as a refusal by him to accept the invitation to take the class. I think

To Speakers, Tutors, and Students

Comrades! How often have you been held up for want of just that one little fact which would clinch your argument?

You Know that capitalist concerns are paying large dividends on watered capital.

You Know that the workers' standard of life is steadily going down.

You Know that international capitalism controls international politics. But when that tiresome fellow at the back of the hall shouts out "Can the speaker give us a single instance?" well, you just can't lay your hands on one.

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162 Buckingham Palace Rd., London, S.W.1

your readers will agree with that view.

The request to approach the E.C. of the Scottish Labour College was, as his last paragraph makes clear, a very transparent attempt to get out of the difficulty he had made for himself by his challenge. The Branch had no concern to ask the S.L.C. to provide a tutor, and was certainly not going to ask it to decide that Mr. Maxwell should act inconsistently with his principles, as his letter made it clear he would if he acted as a W.E.A. tutor. He should have thought of that before he made the speech at the Trades and Labour Council.

Mr. Maxwell was invited because the Branch thought him competent to take the class and that having issued the challenge, he would be willing to accept the invitation. He was not willing, and that ended the matter so far as the W.E.A. was concerned.

Yours sincerely,
HERBERT E. R. HIGHTON
(Organising Secretary).

[As Mr. Highton now realises that an N.C.L.C. tutor cannot, consistently with his principles, lecture for the W.E.A., this correspondence can now cease.—Ed. PLEBS.]

PLEBS SUMMER SCHOOLS

HAVE you booked for Cober Hill next week? There *may* (we won't promise there will, by the time this is printed) be a spare place or two still available. Write without delay to PLEBS Office, enclosing booking fee (10s.), if you find you can get along. The cost of the week's board and lodging is £3 3s.

If you've already secured your place, remember:—the School opens Saturday, July 4th. Book a cheap ticket to SCARBORO' if any are available; and then book on thence to CLOUGHTON. When you get there you'll soon find the Cober Hill Guest House—and see some Plebs badges about.

Here is a programme of evening fixtures for the week (we shall have some morning discussions, too):—

Sunday, July 5th.—“Sidelights on Parliament.” ELLEN C. WILKINSON, M.P.

Monday, July 6th.—Song Recital by WM. PAUL, and Play Readings.

Tuesday, July 7th.—“Labour Party Re-Organisation.” C. L. MALONE.

Wednesday, July 8th.—“Left Wing Policy.” GEO. LANSBURY, M.P.

Thursday, July 9th.—“Problems of Trade Unionism To-day.” MARK STARR.

Friday, July 10th.—“Workers' Education in America.” J. F. HORRABIN.

Our second School will be held at WIMEREUX, near Boulogne, August 8th—15th. The fee is £6 5s., *including rail and boat return fares from London*. We're nearly booked up for this—don't delay if you're going to join us.

The programme here will leave ample time for excursions, etc. The lecture list will fall under two main heads: (1) Workers' Education Abroad; we hope to have as speakers representatives of the Belgian Labour College and the Proletarian University, Milan, and one or two French comrades; (2) Forthcoming PLEBS Textbooks: Outlines of, and discussions on, the history textbooks which we are issuing during next winter's session; R. W. Postgate, J. F. Horrabin, Ellen Wilkinson and others will be among the speakers. Geo. Hicks will also speak on International T. U. Unity.

■ All arrangements for this Wimereux week have to be finally settled by the middle of this month. If you've sent in your name, and haven't had a circular, giving full particulars, instructions, etc., from PLEBS Office, communicate with us at once. If you're intending coming, but haven't yet booked your place, *do so without fail before July 12th*.

Particulars of District and Divisional Schools will be found in “N.C.L.C. Notes” this month.

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)

International Summer Schools.—The General Council of the British Trades Union Congress has offered six scholarships to N.C.L.C. students for the I.F.T.U. Summer Schools. One School is being held at Brunnsvig, near Stockholm, from 1st to 15th August, while the other will take place at Prague, Czechoslovakia, from 17th to 31st August. First year students are *not* eligible. The scholarships are valued at £12 10s. each, which equals the cost of the School plus the fare from London. Every student must, of course, be a Trade Unionist. Applications stating name of Union and Branch, and N.C.L.C. classes attended, should be forwarded *immediately* to the N.C.L.C. Office, 22, Elm Row, Edinburgh.

Rothsay Summer School.—The school and the annual meeting are being reported on elsewhere. However, let me thank most heartily all those who helped to make both a success. The number of students and delegates at the week summer school was 109, while at the week-end school which followed the students numbered 29.

New Correspondence Course.—R. W. Postgate is the examiner for a new N.C.L.C. Course entitled "Revolutionary Periods in History."

"Lansbury's Labour Weekly."—By arrangement with the N.C.L.C. *Lansbury's Labour Weekly* is publishing a series of lectures in topical form on English and Essay-writing. The lectures are being contributed by the

As we go to press we learn that the result of the N.C.L.C. ballot on the T.U. C. Scheme is as follows :

For acceptance, 68 ;

Against, 7 ;

Spoiled papers, 1.

supervisor of the N.C.L.C. Correspondence Course Department, Christine Millar.

London Summer School and Training Centre—August 1st to 22nd, 1925.—The work at this School will be divided into two sections: (a) General Summer School Work, (b) Tutors' Training. Facilities will be available for those who desire to attend for one, two or three weeks. Students training as tutors are strongly recommended to attend for the three weeks if at all possible.

The School will be under the charge of W. T. Goode, M.A., who has specialised in the training of both men and women teachers and who is also well known in the Labour Movement, especially in relation to Russia.

W. Coxon will lecture on Teaching Methods; T. Ashcroft and Maurice Dobb will deal with Economics with special reference to points in which Marxian differs from Orthodox Economic Theories; J. F. Horrabin, on Economic Geography and Imperialism; Mark Starr and R. W. Postgate, History; A. A. Purcell will give a special series of lectures on the International Trade Union Movement; Rutland Boughton takes for his subject Music and the Workers.

The cost of residence at the School will be as follows:—

Summer School Students and Students coming as a result of Scholarships from Unions, etc.:

£2 16s. per week.

Students paying their own expenses who are training as Tutors, and who undertake to tutor at least one Class during next Winter:

£2 10s. for one week,

or £2 5s. per week for two or more weeks.

The booking fee of 10s. should be forwarded to the N.C.L.C. Office *immediately*. Every Division should make

certain that it sends at least one student, apart from Divisional Organisers, to the Training Centre.

What the Divisions are doing

Div. 2.—Mr. A. A. Purcell was very pleased with the Salisbury meeting which was a really creditable one. Appropriately enough, the first Day School run for the National Union of Agricultural Workers by the N.C.L.C. was held at Dorchester last month. Mark Starr spoke on the *Problems of Trade Unionism* and emphasised how few knew anything about the struggle and sacrifice of men like the Tolpuddle Martyrs which made Labour Organisations a possibility. Mr. F. James, C.C., presided. It is hoped to start special weekly classes to assist the Agricultural Workers.

Div. 3.—The successful Braintree class on "Trade Unionism" is attended regularly by a delegate from the Women's Section of Labour Party, who afterwards gives a detailed report to Section members unable to attend. Norwich School appreciated visit from J. Jones on June 9th; likewise, Lowestoft and Brentwood Trades Council on 8th and 9th June. Peterboro' Economics Class finished on June 21st. Play readings were given at Bedford on June 14th, and Hitchin. School arranged for Grays on 19th June. Organiser has helped Division 4 at Griffithstown and Division 2 at Eastleigh. Visits arranged to Luton and Cambridge Trades Councils.

Div. 4.—Two Day Schools were held at Swansea and Glynneath respectively with the assistance of Comrade G. Hicks and the Divisional Organiser. In each case members of our affiliated organisations took advantage of the opportunity. An Educational Scheme providing Free Educational facilities for 5,000 members has been arranged with the Ogmere and Gilfach Miners District upon the basis of £1 1s. per 100 members. In connection with this scheme a successful "All in Educational Conference" was held at the Workmen's Hall, Ogmere, when the local Hall Committees and Co-operative Society decided to co-operate for a united Educational Scheme under the auspices of the N.C.L.C. Aberavon Labour College much regrets that it is losing its tutor,

Mr. L. Watters, who has conducted classes under the N.C.L.C. since his return from the Labour College, and who has now secured an appointment at Unity House. Three public educational meetings have been held at Newport, Brynmawr and Garnfach. Arrangements are being made to hold Day Schools at Llanelly and Newport.

Div. 5.—During the year this Division ran forty classes with 553 students, in addition to a number of public lectures.

Div. 6.—Classes are being arranged for the training of tutors. A Summer School is being held at the Clarion Club House, Sheldon, near Birmingham, in August. Terms for students paying own fees: Saturday 1st to Saturday 8th August, 33s. 6d. (10s. deposit); Saturday tea to Tuesday dinner, 16s. (5s. deposit). Send booking fee now to T. D. Smith, 12, Old Meeting Street, West Bromwich. Will those who desire a tutorial class in the Potteries please write T. D. Smith immediately?

Div. 7.—The Summer School at Heatmount Hall, Ilkley, held during May, was a success. We had an attendance of twenty from the Colleges and six visitors. On the Saturday evening the Organiser spoke on "Historical Materialism," and on the Sunday morning Comrade W. Brooke lectured on the "Control of Industry." The students unanimously decided to ask that the Division organise another Week-end School.

Div. 8.—Local Committees have been formed at Bolton and Stockport to stimulate activity in those areas.

The Manchester Tutors' training course has nearly completed its twenty-six weeks with Fred Casey as trainer. Six tutors will be the fruits of this good work. Caston Hall lectures are well attended. A Week-end School was held at Tottington Clarion Club House, near Bury, on June 20th and 21st. Week-end Schools are to be held at "The Woodlands," Whaley Bridge, near Stockport (just in the borders of Derbyshire), on July 4th and 5th, and at the Clarion Club House, Handford, Cheshire, on July 18th and 19th. Manchester College special "Picnic" to Handforth is on July 18th.

Div. 9.—The Workington Trades and Labour Council have affiliated

to the local Labour College. Last year the Division ran fifty-seven classes with 1,757 Students. The N.E. Tutors College (Sec., W. Coxon), has the excellent record of forty-two classes with 1,123 Students to its credit. Darlington did well with seven classes and 492 Students.

Div. 10 (Scotland).—The Report submitted to the Ayrshire Annual Conference showed that last year's work had been the most satisfactory in the history of the Organisation. Thanks are due to the energetic Secretary, J. W. Kerr, to the Tutor, Jack Jones, and to the many other comrades who assisted in the work. Summer Schools are being arranged. Glasgow has arranged a Week-end School at Balloch.

Div. 11 (Ireland).—Belfast Branch of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union has decided to affiliate on a 2d. per member basis. Arrangements are being made to hold a Mass Meeting and Conference with A. A. Purcell as Speaker. A week's Summer School is being held at Barrycarry, near Gobbins, Islandmagee, from Saturday 11th July, to Saturday

18th July. A. Ellis will lecture on "Relation of International Questions to Home Affairs" and on "Trade Union Problems." A. Millar will lecture on "Company Law." The cost of a scholarship for the week is £2 5s. Where a student, however, is paying his own expenses, he may attend on paying 5s. 6d. per day. A Day School will be run on Sunday, the cost being 5s. per head. We hope this first Irish School will be a great success.

N.C.L.C.

Directory.—Additions and Corrections.

Div. 3.—Peterboro' Labour College, Sec.: Mr. A. S. Bools, 147, Huntley Grove, Peterboro', Northants.

Div. 8.—Leigh Labour College, Sec.: Mr. Wm. Stones, 11, Jeffery Street, Leigh, Lancs.

Div. 10.—Scotland. Fife District Committee, Sec.: J. F. Mitchell, 25, Elgin Street, Dunfermline.

National Secretary: Mr. Sydney Walker, c/o Cameron, 29, Upper Achintore, Fort William, Scotland.

The PLEBS Bookshelf

Workers' Education in England and the United States. By Margaret T. Hodgen (Kegan Paul, 12s. 6d.).

THIS is the fullest and best documented history of working-class educational activities which has yet appeared. Moreover, though its author is apparently connected with a University (Berkeley, California—a familiar name to all readers of Upton Sinclair's *The Goose Step*), it appreciates and, in the main, does full justice to the significance of the Plebs movement for Independent Working-Class Education in Britain. It has a really valuable bibliography (though lacking an index). In fact, the only serious criticism one can bring against it is that it only comes down to about the summer of 1923—and the last two years have been particularly eventful ones as regards workers' education over here. But down to that date it is, as I have

said, a very full and accurate record. And you can gauge its author's point of view from this passage in her introductory chapter:—

The expansion or suppression of knowledge has been dictated by political or economic expediency. Educational policy has rested in the hands of governments or controlling classes. These have at times fostered learning; but their efforts have been directed . . . to training those already in authority to govern in such a way as to retain their authority. This tendency is evident alike in antiquity and in modern European society.

I have been especially interested in the book because, in telling the story of workers' education in England during the nineteenth century, the author is handling the same historical material as my wife and I dealt with (necessarily, more briefly) in our little book on *Working-Class Education* last year.

This book was apparently finished before ours was published; but in its general outline, and in its estimates of particular individuals and movements, it is pretty closely similar to ours. I don't, of course, put this forward as conclusive evidence that the book is good; but naturally one gets a certain amount of satisfaction out of the fact that one's own judgments are confirmed by an independent writer.

Miss Hodgkin gives Hodgkin his due place as a pioneer. She omits any reference to the Corresponding Societies of the last decade of the eighteenth century; and she makes rather more of Lovett's work and influence—as an “independent”—than seems to me to be quite justified by the facts. But she lets herself go in fine style on the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge and its middle- and upper-class patrons; and on the whole capitalist-propaganda “drive” of the mid-Victorian period.

Take this paragraph as evidence of the soundness of her historical judgment:—

The characteristic feature of English adult working-class education in the Nineteenth Century was the centralisation of administrative control in the hands of upper class persons and institutions. The Adult Schools, for example, were usually maintained and managed by the landed or pious gentry; the Mechanics' Institutes by the manufacturers and their friends in the government; the Working Men's College, University Extension and the Social Settlement by clergymen, welfare workers and educators. Members of the working class were welcome to the class-room, but not to the council chamber. The programme of their instruction and the goal of their education* were drawn up and determined by the vote of their betters.

When we said something of the kind in our book, reviewers friendly to the “extensionist” point of view remarked that of course this sort of thing wasn't history, but only sectarian propaganda. I'm waiting with interest to see their verdicts on this book,

which combines full appreciation of the “good faith” and sincerity of many W.E.A.ers with a pretty clear-sighted estimate of the real tendencies of the “extensionist” movement. Here are one or two of Miss Hodgkin's comments on the W.E.A.:—

The Workers' Educational Association is a modern expression of the humanitarian tradition in England. It is connected by ties of consanguinity with every preceding effort for working-class education initiated in the nineteenth century [*cf.* her comments on these quoted above]. It represents the most recent and most successful effort of the governing classes, through the Universities, to raise the intellectual level of labour. . . . Its inspiration was drawn from humanitarian, religious and intellectual sources rather than from working-class experience. Its predecessors and nearest kin are the University Extension Movement, the Settlement Movement, Co-operation, and Christian Socialism. . . .

And after quoting various declarations by W.E.A. officials of “complete class neutrality,” she goes on to point out how the propaganda of the Labour Colleges has forced the W.E.A. “upon the battlefield, to define its purpose, to reiterate its allegiance to working-class principles in stronger and stronger terms and finally to be placed on the defensive.” “The insistence of the Labour Colleges upon independent working-class education, or education for workers controlled by workers, has forced other enterprises claiming working-class support into salutary seasons of self-examination.”

Keep in touch with the Irish Labour movement by reading

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35, Parnell Square, Dublin.

* Italics mine.

Her remarks on our own movement are exceedingly friendly:—

It was born out of dissension. It has thrived on opposition. Undoubtedly, part of its intellectual stock-in-trade consists in keeping the subject of Workers' Education alive by systematic and uncompromising irritation of other agencies. The force of its logic is enhanced by the fact that it takes the offensive, and by the activity of spokesmen who are witty, unhampered by a desire to promote harmony, and sincere. . . .

Plebeians show their real talent for keeping the subject of Workers' Education alive in the pages of their magazine, *The Plebs*, which carries each month a flood of biting aphoristic wisdom sometimes original, sometimes culled from literature, always to the point. [She quotes several of our front cover "mottoes," published between 1920 and 1922.] The Plebs League wears the Twentieth Century mantle of Chartism—this last meaning that we are the heirs of Hodgskin, whom she ranks among the Chartist pioneers.

I've left myself too little space to deal adequately with Miss Hodgen's account of workers' education in the United States. But I'm glad to note that she makes one main criticism which some of us, basing our judgment on such literature as we could get hold of, have made on the American Workers' Education Bureau—and which in my own case was supplemented by some first-hand observation during a few weeks in America last year. Writing of the various T.U. Colleges and of the W.E.B. she remarks:—

Although all of these enterprises have assumed the burden of educating the working class, they offer no common social philosophy, no explanation of the struggle between capital and labour, and no consistent or class apology for educational activity independent of the contemporary public school and university system. Most of them state their educational purpose with reluctance and in broad general terms. They strike somewhat blindly in

the general direction of more knowledge, confident that whatever its destination it will somehow or other lead them aright.

She is rightly contemptuous of "truisms such as the definition of education as a 'quality coming out of life,'" and such statements as that "in seeking knowledge labour seeks 'not a living but a life.'" All this, she observes, is true. "But with no other explanation of the purpose of Workers' Education the casual observer, thinking of the ramifications of the elementary school system, is forced to ask 'Why have it, then?'"

But they love windy phrases in America! A.F. of L. support for a Women's T.U. League plan for a School was won on the slogan—"The need for social interpretation." Which, if it means anything, would seem to mean in this connection the need for going on talking in the hope that sooner or later they would find themselves saying something sensible! It must be borne in mind, however, that several of the working-class educational centres in America, notably the Brookwood Labour College, are actually doing far more valuable work—from The PLEBS point of view—than the vagueness and woolliness of their declared aims would suggest.

There are a few small printer's or clerical errors in the book which are probably due to the proofs of the English edition having been read by someone not conversant with the subject. "Birbeck" (p. 44, *et seq.*) should of course be "Birkbeck." "Fox, Sons and Co." (p. 123, footnote, should be "Fox, Jones & Co." "Trade Union College" (p. 151, footnote) should be "Trade Union Congress." Keir Hardie's name was not "Hardy" (Bibliog., p. 291); and the writer of "What We Study and Why," PLEBS, Sept.—Nov., 1922, was T. Ashcroft, not "Ashcraft." Two PLEBS pamphlets, *The Burning Question of Education* and *What does Education mean to the Workers?* both quoted in the body of the book, are omitted from the Bibliography. . . . But this is an exceedingly interesting book. See that your local Free Library acquires a copy.

J. F. H.



His ideal!

— This gentleman is very much opposed to the circulation of such books as

A WORKER LOOKS AT HISTORY

by Mark Starr

the new and revised edition of which is now on sale, price 1s. 6d. (postpaid 1s. 8d.) This book, since its original publication in 1917, has been widely used as an elementary textbook of English Industrial History in N.C.L.C. classes. The new edition has been carefully revised and partly re-written.

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