

# The March 1926 PLEBS



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# THE PLEBS

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## THE COAL CRISIS

*We are giving first place this month to articles dealing with various aspects of the Coal Crisis. The miners have never been backward in supporting Independent Working-Class Education. It is up to I.W.C.E.ers to repay this support by constituting themselves propagandists for the miners.*

*Comrade A. J. Cook, Secretary of the M.F.G.B., has written us a "Foreword." Miner comrades in various districts have, at our request, sent us short articles dealing with the situation as it affects their particular areas. Comrade J. Hamilton, Chairman of the N.C.L.C., contributes a valuable article on the history of miners' Trade Unionism.*

*We look to our friends to "pass this number on," and to win for us new readers—especially in the coalfields.*

### NOW THEN I.W.C.E.ers !

By A. J. Cook

**T**HE PLEBS, being the mouthpiece of the Labour Colleges, besides providing food for thought on all important industrial and political questions, especially the educational side of the Labour Movement, ought to see that all its readers understand the great issues involved in the present coal controversy.

For years we have been moving forward, often blindly, towards more efficient organisation—generally forced by economic conditions. The success or failure of a movement on particular issues brought in its train division, disgust, and often despair. The great difficulty in our Trade Union movement is to *apply* the changes which we realise, theoretically, are necessary. And that cannot be done effectively during a conflict.

Coal—Conflict—Confusion—these things too often go together, and at present many workers' minds are going astray in the direction of co-partnership—co-operation with Capitalism. Lack of understanding of the issues involved leads to compromise because of fear of a conflict. Therefore, every student of the N.C.L.C. and every Pleb has great and grave responsibilities; first as "information agents"; secondly in using every ounce of energy in directing the movement into right channels. Revolt is useless unless harnessed to organised power and directed by sound knowledge. So while

you and all of us have been preparing the minds of the workers for great changes, *we must now concentrate all our energies on preparing means to carry these changes into effect.*

The coal-owners are determined to put the clock back. The power of the Unions must be smashed—hence their cry for District Agreements. Capitalism cannot live as at present organised without longer hours and lower wages. And the coal-owners have not troubled to conceal their true objective.

The Miners' Federation has had too many struggles to secure even our present position to give up without a terrific struggle. There is no room for compromise. There is no solution in compromise.

I appeal to every thinking member of the Labour Movement to take his part in the coming struggle. *We can have working-class solidarity if we work for it!* And in the task of winning working-class solidarity every member of the Labour College movement has a part to play. Get to it!

A. J. Cook.

## WHAT THE MINERS THINK

### LANCASHIRE

**T**HE present crisis in the coal industry is world wide and due to (a) world shrinkage in consumption; (b) increased industrial development in other countries, thereby destroying markets and creating new competitors; (c) progressive development of other sources of power, e.g. oil and hydro-electric power.

Since 1913 world coal production has decreased five per cent, and European coal production thirteen per cent.

The owners propose to solve this problem by a vigorous policy of price cutting. The 7-hour day (8-hour in practice), minimum wage and subsidies must go, and they demand a return to district settlements. What in effect these proposals mean we already know. Returns published by the M.F.G.B. indicate that under the coal-owners' proposals wages would be five per cent above 1914 rates, or an average weekly wage of 30s.

The Lancashire coal-field is favourably situated in a dense industrial area with splendid transport facilities and in close proximity to the seaboard. Despite the fact that lower wages are paid in Lancashire, coal produced in Yorkshire, carrying higher freightage rates, is under-selling Lancs. coal on the seaboard and in the coal-field itself. The

reason is that the Yorks. coal-field is more modern with better mechanical equipment than the Lancs. field, where collieries were sunk and equipped to meet requirements of thirty to fifty years ago. Consequently increased unemployment, short time and lower wages, is the present day tendency in Lancashire.

A return to district settlements would not eliminate the natural and economic differences existing between different pits and coal-fields, but would further intensify them to the disadvantage of the miners generally. Increased output, resultant from a longer working day, would mean a war of price-cutting, with larger profits to the owners and lower wages, accompanied by increased unemployment, for the miners.

To expect a permanent solution to the coal problem within the limits of capitalism is crying for the moon. But we can compel the capitalist class to give better wages and conditions of livelihood to those employed if we are prepared and organised for the purpose. The workers must Dominate or be Damned!

ALEX EVANS.

### S. WALES

IT is not intended that the following is to be regarded as the official opinion of the South Wales miners as to present conditions and prospects of the mining industry: similarly as regards the protective measures advocated, and the suggestions made with reference to the wages issue of the immediate future. As yet, the South Wales Miners' Federation has not crystallised its majority opinions in the form of resolutions, etc. But I have no hesitation in submitting the following as expressing the general opinion and determination of the rank and file in the South Wales Coalfield.

There is a growing conviction among our men that capitalism in the coal trade is irretrievably declining at increasing speed: that it consequently can only maintain itself for the time being by means of a struggle far more intense than anything experienced in the past. It is fully recognised that powerful factors (largely of recent growth), national and international, are the cause of this. Our men realise the devastating effects, particularly upon such essentially *exporting* coal-fields as S. Wales, of new motive powers, such as oil and electricity. The former, for example, now supplies the motive power for over twenty-five per cent of the ships bunkering at British ports, while the enormous expansion in the application of the latter, particularly in Germany, has enabled that country to throw about 2,000,000 tons of black coal per month upon the European markets, notwithstanding that its present output is almost 2,000,000 tons per month *less* than in 1913. Add to this the development of other European coal-fields and of coal-fields outside Europe, the restoration of the Gold

Standard rendering effective competition in foreign markets almost hopelessly difficult without reducing costs of production, i.e., reducing wages and increasing hours of employment ; and the increasing domination of the mining industry by "composite" industrialists whose chief aim appears to be to regard coal-mining as the milch-cow to the other concerns they are interested in.

Very few S. Wales miners entertain any false optimism on the strength of the slight increase in output that has recently taken place; this can be accounted for by the stocks that are being built up in anticipation of the impending crisis, and the huge uneconomic drop in coal prices since the advent of the subsidy.

There is no mistaking the attitude of the Welsh miners with regard to the threatened crisis. The experience of "Red Friday" in July, 1925, has had a tremendous effect in wakening into consciousness a realisation of the potential power of organised Labour. This has been deepened by the demands made by the owners at the recent Coal Commission, which would, on an average, mean to the South Wales a wage of only 7½d. per day above 1914 wage, to cope with an increase of seventy-three per cent in the cost of living.

S. Wales will resist at any cost any attempts to reduce wages, increase hours of employment, or revert to District Agreements. We see no temporary peaceful alternative to at least the continuance of present conditions, aided by the subsidy, until a transformation of the industry has been effected as outlined in the case presented by Labour to the Coal Commission. A subsidy in some form is certainly inevitable if immediate collapse is to be obviated ; whether it be given in the form of a loan—as say of £2,000,000 to Messrs. Dorman, Long & Co.—or as at present granted to the whole of the Mining Industry. But notwithstanding all this, the supreme clash is rapidly drawing nearer.

In the meantime we urge the centralisation of power in the General Council, and the reorganisation of the Trades Union Movement, making for the maximum of mobility and flexibility to assure in the day of crisis a more scientific disposition of the workers' forces.

S. O. DAVIES.

### YORKSHIRE

**Y**ORKSHIRE may be put down as one of the Districts which will resist to the utmost any reversion to longer hours and District Wage Agreements. The attitude of Yorkshire to the existing Wage Agreement has been that of seeking to amend it rather than terminate it. In the early days of its application Yorkshire was inclined to the view that this Agreement was sound in principle if bad in practice. But constant agitation by those opposed to those principles has led to a demand

formulating a proposal that :—(1) Wages be fixed in relation to the proceeds of the industry, and (2) be based on the cost of living. This would mean that wages would never fall below the cost of living ; at the same time ensuring the miner a share in any boom or prosperous period.

Yorkshire miners have a strong suspicion that behind the coal-owners' proposals is a desire to re-establish British capitalism in the interests of Finance Capital. If this is permitted to be done out of the workers' wages, then the whole British working class will pay the price sooner or later.

F. RATCLIFFE.

### STAFFORDSHIRE

THE Staffordshire coal-fields are geographically, and for local negotiations, divided into three districts, viz. : South Staffs., Cannock Chase, and North Staffs. For the working of the present Wages Agreement, South Staffs is grouped with the East Worcester and Salop fields, Cannock Chase with the Eastern Area, and North Staffs. with Lancs. and Cheshire.

South Staffs is in the heart of England's greatest varied industrial area, the Black Country. Here the chief difficulty is water and inadequate facilities to deal with it. The collieries in this area are mostly small ones, and, owing to lack of capital, inefficiently equipped with machinery and appliances. As a result of this, men in this area have been receiving the minimum wage since the present Agreement came into operation, viz. : 9s. 2d. per shift for hewers, etc., and *pro rata*. The pumping operations are carried out by the S. Staffs Mines Drainage Board, the collieries in the area being charged 1d. per ton on coal extracted from the top seams, and 10d. per ton from the bottom seams. But this relatively weak plant is quite inadequate, flooding occurring occasionally, resulting in utter loss or deterioration of coal. As a consequence of the heavy charge for pumping the deeper seams, very little of this coal is worked. With efficient up-to-date central pumping stations, this area could be effectively drained. Assuming this done, and the present production *doubled*, as it might well be, this coal-field would have a "life" of over 100 years. When we consider that one of the seams in this district is 18 ft. thick, the possibility of remunerative return for capital outlay on efficient and scientific plants is obvious.

Separated from the S. Staffs. field by what is known as the Bentley or Western Fault is the Cannock Chase, whose house-coals are noted throughout the Midland and Home Counties. The collieries here are on the whole modernised, one colliery supplying the surrounding Rural Councils with electricity for lighting purposes. On the opposite side of the coal-field we find the most



modern pit in the county, the whole of its motive power being electricity, which it obtains from the neighbouring towns of Wolverhampton and Walsall. This coal-field would serve as an ideal site for the super-power station proposed for the Midlands under the new Government Electricity Scheme, and thereby also would directly benefit in cheaper coal-production.

A large percentage of the coal obtained in this county is house-coal of many grades and qualities, and is loaded into numerous privately-owned trucks. A general pooling of *all* trucks would eliminate useless and superfluous shunting.

A "domestic" coal-field has its seasonal trade fluctuation, with its corresponding under-employment fluctuation. (In summer many pits work only three or four days per week.) To prevent this recurring under-employment it would be necessary:—

(1) To estimate roughly yearly needs.

(2) Municipalities (or Co-op. Societies) to buy and retail directly. (Some storing would in summer be necessary, but done by Municipalities themselves would eliminate double "handling.")

(3) Weekly or monthly average needs being known, staffs could be regulated accordingly.

(4) By-product plants should be erected, and attention turned to the manufacture of bricks from pit-mounds. A good quality of brick is being made by one colliery from these dirt-tips. Any surplus of men that may accrue from the adoption of the previous suggestions could be absorbed in the working of these plants. The proposal of Sir Richard Redmayne re grouping of pits is a practical one for this county.

In conclusion, it must be clearly understood, whether or not the industry is reorganised, or the system changed, the miners cannot accept anything that will decrease their standard of living, or increase their hours of working. Many miners are taking an active and intelligent interest in the industry. Their knowledge should be utilised in an advisory capacity by the formation of pit and district committees upon which they should be represented.

S. WILLETTS.

### NOTTS

**I**N the Notts. coal-field organisation is very backward. The "butty system" is still in operation—a system of subcontracting which belongs to the Feudal period! Nevertheless we working miners look upon the proposals put forward by the coal-owners with contempt. We may appear to have better conditions, but this is owing to those outside this area being paid far too low.

We know, despite all the coal-owners' efforts to persuade us otherwise, that the 8-hours day and District Settlements would be a very

bad thing for us in this area. In addition to losing the benefits of many years' trade union work, it means wholesale reductions of wages in all but the best mines. We have several first-rate mines in Notts. If District Settlements were resorted to who knows that we would soon see additional photos in our picture papers of special trains of miners leaving their own district for this! We should very soon have a situation with two miners for one job; in turn this would mean each for himself, miners struggling and fighting one with the other instead of with the owners.

This is the very opposite to solidarity and must be resisted at all costs.

The proposals put forward at the Coal Commission by Tawney and others, though not likely to prove an effective *permanent* solution, would be a step towards central control and direction of the industry. They formed the only constructive policy put forward before the Commission.

The following items are popular amongst the miners here :—

- (1) A national wage agreement.
- (2) 6-hours day, in order that the unemployed miners might be absorbed in the industry. Production should be regulated according to demand.
- (3) Wage based on the cost of living. For no matter where we work the price of bread and margarine are the same. These things do not vary with the varying geological conditions.
- (4) Guaranteed week, so that miners would have a degree of economic security, particularly when affected by depression, machine breakages, congestion of traffic, bad ventilation and other things over which we have no control.
- (5) Nationalisation, with workers' control.

To get these things we shall need the assistance of all working-class organisations in the country.

Good as the manifestation of working-class solidarity was on Red Friday, 1925, we must have a greater for May, 1926!

GEO. WILLIAMS.

### DERBYSHIRE

**D**URING the past few months, even the moderate labour leader who has the wellbeing of his people at heart has found that, under the present organisation of industry his very modest demands have become revolutionary demands, and more and more his thoughts have been forced into revolutionary channels.

That industry cannot pay a living wage to its slaves was the keynote of the owners' evidence before the Coal Commission. Reconstruction, from the coal-owners' point of view, means longer hours, less wages, and 100,000 more mine workers unemployed.

The imposition of conditions so vile will be resisted by the men in this district to the utmost. As opposed to the above The Miners' Federation of Great Britain in No. 4 and 5 Memorandum of evidence submitted a scheme of reconstruction by which we solidly stand.

What the report of the commission will bring forth can only be supposed or guessed, but whatever it is it cannot bring immediate prosperity to the industry. In the meantime we insist that the miner shall not be driven down to conditions worse than chattel slavery, but looks to his fellow-workers on the railways, docks and elsewhere, to assist him in effectively resisting the attack that has been launched.

H. HICKEN.

### DURHAM

OF all the solutions put forward to stabilise the mining industry, Lord Londonderry's scheme of district settlements is of greatest importance, because it has been and is being applied. The last year has seen the Durham miners give up the hewers'  $6\frac{1}{2}$  hour shift that has been in operation for generations. In the Durham coal-field the machinery for dealing with wages, conditions, disputes, etc., was known as "joint committee." If wages were ten per cent above "county average" the owners claimed a reduction, and if wages were ten per cent below the men claimed an increase. As the miners found from experience that this machinery retained peace and harmony at the expense of wages, etc., they decided to scrap same. The Council (delegate) Meeting decided in 1923 that there must be no further reductions in wages or increase in hours, and this was put into effect immediately by the scrapping of the Joint Committee.

Sherburn miners were locked out in 1924 because they refused to accept a reduction in wages and the increase of the hewers' hours from  $6\frac{1}{2}$  to 7, as this was a breach of county custom and conditions. The reply of the county was a levy to help the Sherburn men, and an attempt by the county leaders to have the joint committee re-instituted, with a fifteen per cent instead of ten per cent margin, the latter move being defeated by the rank and file. Although these men were "out" because they refused to accept something that was a breach of Trade Union conditions, their application for unemployment insurance benefit was turned down by the umpire—under a Labour Government.

This saw colliery after colliery attacked and closed down because they refused to accept a reduction in wages and increased hours. Big combines like Harton, Horden and Consett attacked individual collieries and after standing out for periods of fourteen to fifty-two weeks forced them to accept wages and conditions that were a violation

of custom and agreements. The national "truce" of 31st July, 1925, saw no respite, in spite of assurances to the contrary, and in November last the Durham Miners' Association took a ballot vote of its members asking if they agreed to give fourteen days' notice to preserve the *status quo*. In spite of the leaders' recommendation to vote against the stoppage there was a majority for fighting but not the requisite two-thirds majority. December saw the end of the county issue. Yet there are still collieries waging an heroic and determined struggle after eight months of hard battle to hold on to something that our great-grandfathers had, which the D.M.A. has given up.

Lord Londonderry's proposals are not something they are prepared to discuss, they are already applied; and if they have increased the hours to seven they will increase further. As Sir Hugh Bell said to the annual meeting of Horden Collieries, Ltd., "If the Commission finds a solution of our complicated problems it will, we venture to assert, be by recommending the return to sound principles regardless of statutory minimum wages or legislative limitation of hours."

There is no solution for the mines—under capitalism!

L.

## The CLASS STRUGGLE in the MINING INDUSTRY

*"There must be rich and poor—there must be fortunate and unfortunate, for blessed purposes; for if there were no poor there would be no sweet and holy charity."* Mr. Baillie Cochrane of Cambusnethan, colliery landowner, *North British Daily Mail* (27-10-1863).

**D**ESPITE the sweet and holy sentiments expressed above, the history of the mining industry is one of repeated epic struggles between colliers and mine-owners, in which charity and blessed purposes find no place. Every tiny reform, advance in wages, or improved working conditions, have had to be forced by prolonged agitation and strikes. Repeated lock-outs by the owners to enforce worsened conditions have been a commonplace. The recent proposals of the Mining Association to the Royal Commission are characteristic of this historical attitude.

The colliers have emerged from a condition close to slavery much more recently than other workers. Indeed, in Scotland they only escaped from actual serfdom by an Act of 1799; but this same Act prohibited combination amongst them. In 1609 an Act in Scotland declared that "no person within the realm

hereafter shall fee, hire, or conduce any saltrais, coalcaris, or coalbeararis without a sufficient testimonial" (from previous employers). Employers had power to apprehend "all sturdy vagabonds" and "sturdy beggars to be put to labour." There was a penalty of £1,000 Scots on employers taking a collier without a testimonial, while the collier is to be considered a thief and punished in his body if he has taken "forewages and fees" from his new employer. A 1641 Act was secured by the employers to force colliers to work six days per week under a penalty.

The collier as a "free" man sold his labour-power annually for money wages or goods. He was compelled to produce a fixed quantity weekly for a fixed wage. If the selling price of coal was lowered, then wages were proportionately reduced. Fines were general, and he had to provide his own "bearer," usually his wife or daughter. Bitter strikes were inevitable against these conditions when Trade Unions were formed.

The last quarter of the 18th century was a period of immense industrial activity. 1776 saw the perfection of the steam engine; there was a rapid change in the cotton industry from mainly domestic to complete factory production. New industrial towns sprang up in the coal-fields, and the enclosure movement was intensified when the world was being made safe from the menace of Napoleonism. Into the new industrial areas and coal-fields flocked the dispossessed peasantry and unfortunate domestic workers. Social problems were created, and these, with the bogey of Jacobinism, caused shivers of apprehension among the ruling classes. The typical attitude of the latter to the workers is seen by the fact that a hundred men could be killed in an accident in a Northumberland pit and no inquest held. "The Davy lamp, for which the inventor refused to take out a patent, renouncing an income of £5,000 to £10,000 a year, 'his sole object to serve the cause of humanity,' was used in many cases to serve the cause of profits. Deeper and more dangerous seams were worked, and accidents actually increased in number."

In 1810 the Northumberland and Durham miners struck against the conditions of the "yearly bond." There does not appear to have been a definite union, but delegates were chosen to conduct the strike and negotiate. Military force and persecution was used against them, leaders were imprisoned, and they were compelled to return to work on the employers' terms. Fallhouse Wilson, a weaver, organised the Ayrshire miners in 1817. The union was smashed in a fortnight. During a six months' strike in the Edinburgh district (1824) there were savage reprisals, and some blacklegs had their ears cut off. The miners in Dumbarton, Renfrew, and Lanark, were successful in raising wages from 3s. 6d.

to 5s. per day. During the strike "strangers from Ireland" were imported, resulting in a bitter anti-Irish feeling.

A Govan colliery manager founded in 1826 a "Friendly and Free Labour Society" which, as he said, "relieved the workmen from the pernicious effects of strikes."

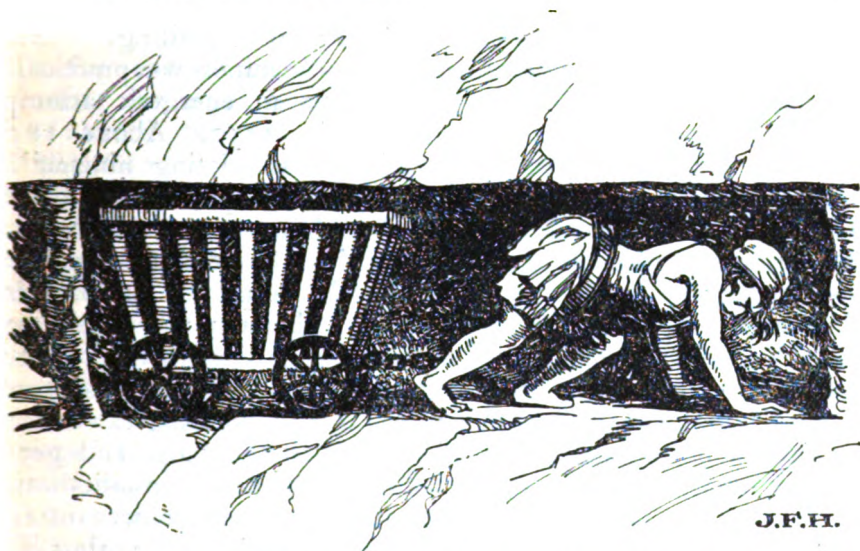
John Doherty founded the National Association for the Protection of Labour in 1830. The miners of Yorkshire, Staffordshire, Lancashire and Cheshire affiliated by decision of a delegate conference; the Derbyshire miners also joined. A Friendly Society of Coal Mining was formed in 1831 in South Wales and connected itself with Doherty's organisation, which, however, broke up in the same year. But the outstanding miners' movement was in the highly developed coalfield of Northumberland and Durham. A Union was formed in 1825, and a big extension took place in 1830 under "Tommy" Hepburn's influence. The prevailing form of wage contract was the system of the "yearly bond." The colliers drew up a schedule of grievances and refused to enter into any "bond" unless these were remedied. A few concessions, as the twelve hours' day for boys instead of one without limit, were obtained by strike action in 1831. The mine-owners organised their forces and in the following year determined to smash the Union. After a prolonged and bitter resistance they were successful. Hepburn was practically made an outlaw, and only eventually obtained employment on the promise to renounce Unionism. A big strike in the West of Scotland was broken up in 1837 by importation of thousands of hungry weavers to act as blacklegs under military protection. The nominal wages at the loom were then 7s. 6d. and 8s. per week.

Shocking revelations as to the conditions of child and women labour in the mines were revealed by the Children's Employment Commission Report, 1842. Mr. Franks, one of the investigators, reported ". . . deadly physical oppression and systematic slavery of which I conscientiously believe no one unacquainted with such facts would credit the existence in the British Dominions." Children of eleven years work from 5 a.m. to 5 p.m. The pit bottoms, says Mr. Franks, are like "common sewers," with an inclination of one in three, and the women, half naked, crawl on hands and knees, harnessed "like horses" to their bogies of coal. Little boys, four or five years, sat all day, cold and shivering, in the darkness. In Lord Balcarres' pits at Aspull Moor the children worked from 5 a.m. to 6 p.m., and some were workhouse apprentices. Lord Ashley's Bill (1843) entirely prohibited female labour underground, and was passed although coal-owners sought an amended measure. The House of Commons carried a second reading limiting the starting age of collier boys to thirteen. Coal-owners, however,

succeeded in getting the starting age reduced to ten, and for boys between ten and thirteen three days' work, of twelve hours per day, per week.

In 1843 a general union of coal-miners spread throughout the kingdom, headed by the Northumberland and Durham men. They appointed a chartist solicitor, W. P. Roberts, as their "attorney general." On the expiry of the contracts, March 31, 1844, Roberts was empowered to draft a new agreement, demanding

- (a) Payment by weight instead of measure.
- (b) Determination of weight by means of ordinary scales subject to the public inspectors.



A girl hauling a loaded truck in a coal-mine—one of the horrors revealed by the Report of the Royal Commission, 1842. "They were joined to the truck by a girde with a chain that passed between their legs, and so they crawled, dragging the truck. We are told that *not many under six or seven years of age* were employed in this particular way. Some of the passages were only eighteen inches high." (Waters, *Economic History of England*.) The drawing is from a contemporary engraving.

- (c) half yearly renewal of contracts.
- (d) Abolition of fines system and payment according to work actually done.
- (e) Employers to guarantee to miners in their exclusive service at least four days' work per week or wages for same.

The "coal barons" ignored the demands, war was declared, and 40,000 men downed tools. Roberts was extremely successful in defending miners gaoled by despotic justices on trumped-up charges of intimidation, etc. Lord Londonderry practised intimidation, however, in a perfectly "legal" fashion on the shopkeepers

in "his" town of Seaham for giving "his" rebellious workers credit. And the capitalists' last, but infallible resource, the eviction of the miners from their dwellings, owned by the companies, was exercised to the accompaniment of the usual scenes of brutality. After five months' struggle the resistance of the men was at an end, and the Union had completely disappeared by 1848. Soon after, the Lancashire miners formed a union of some 10,000 members. Round the "hungry forties" strikes were numerous amongst the Scots miners. During a dispute in Ayrshire three strikers received sentences of ten years' transportation for rioting. The importation of destitute crofters and Irish were numerous, so much so that three-fourths of the miners in the Lanarkshire coal-field were Irish, an average wage of 2s. 6d. per day prevailing.

During the fifties trade unionism among the miners was practically non-existent, although Martin Jude made an energetic attempt to re-establish a National Association in 1850. About 1855 Alexander Macdonald became prominent, associating himself in all reform movements, and especially against the practice of Truck. "The collier had everything trucked to him—except his coffin; if he went on strike his children ceased to be educated, for the schoolmaster was trucked, supplied by the employer but paid by the worker out of levies on their wages. Similarly the doctor was trucked." At Chapehall a truck store manager died worth £10,000. There is an illuminating extract from the 1841 Commission evidence:—John Evans, schoolmaster: ". . . . Nothing can exceed the mischief of the shops; men will go to the shops and get a pound of sugar, or what not, and take it to the nearest public-house for drink. I frequently myself take goods from the colliers instead of money; the colliers have no money. I can't do anything else. . . . There is very seldom any balance for the working-men to receive; they are screwed down to the lowest possible pitch." Nothing better illustrates the typical attitude of the coal-owners to reform than their determined resistance to the demand of the men to have their own representative at the pit bank who should check the weight paid for. The miners in South Yorkshire, after embittered resistance, obtained this boon from several coal-owners. In January, 1861, the new Act for the Regulation and Inspection of Mines came into force. Boys between ten and twelve years could only be employed if in possession of education certificates; notice of accidents to be sent within twenty-four hours to the authorities, wages not to be paid in "pubs," coals in future to be well and truly weighed. It empowered the miners of each pit to appoint a checkweigher, but confined their choice to persons actually in employment at the particular pit. In the Barnsley district Normansell, when appointed checkweigher, was immediately



dismissed from his employment on this ground, and the Union had to indulge in two years' costly litigation before he was reinstated. Coal-owners had recourse to the law courts in Scotland, "where the Sheriffs obligingly rendered the Act null and void." One sheriff giving judgment, said "the Statute, while it provided that the material should be truly weighed, did not enact that the men should be paid for what was so weighed." For the next twenty years the coal-owners adopted every device to avoid compliance with the law. The Mines Regulation Act, 1872, slightly strengthened the position, but it was not till 1887 that the right was made perfectly clear for the men, at the expense of the whole pit, to appoint a checkweigher with power to keep an accurate record of each man's work.

During the sixties, there was a campaign for many reforms, including the eight hours' day. One newspaper described it as an "absurd project" of "interested professional agitators." Victimisation of many supporters followed. A House of Lords' decision was obtained by a Scots firm of coal-owners, in 1868, abolishing accident compensation on the ground that "the miner received his wages not only for his work but also to compensate him for any risk he ran . . . or any accident that might befall him." Wages were then 2s. 6d. per day. A Miners' Act of 1872 caused widespread disaffection. It reduced from twelve to ten daily the working hours for colliery boys, but increased truck facilities. Among the new special rules was one making the miners themselves responsible for the safety of their working places. Macdonald urged a national strike against these rules, and in fact many sectional strikes in protest occurred.

The *Glasgow Herald* (3-2-1876) had a remarkable leader commenting on the insufficiency of the miners' wages and enumerating the many deductions. A protest was also made against the day-to-day tenure of the houses, the condition of which would "shock the sanitary officer."

The National Union of Miners was established in 1862—3, but an almost uninterrupted series of strikes and lockouts in many districts prevented it from taking a firm hold, and it survived after 1879 only in Northumberland, Durham, and Yorkshire. A younger rival, the Amalgamated Association of Miners, dominated South Wales and the Midlands, but broke up and vanished in 1875. In that year there was a furious conflict in South Wales owing to the men's refusal to submit to a ten per cent reduction. Work was, however, resumed at a reduction of twelve and a half per cent. During the period when the "Junta" were leading the agitation for legal protection of T.U. funds, repeal of the Master and Servant Act, etc., Alexander Macdonald and Thomas Burt, both miners,

were returned to Parliament at the 1874 General Election. The Larkhall miners voted £100 for Macdonald's election expenses, Annbank £10, and the Maryhill miners levied themselves 1s. per head. The sliding scale was introduced as a method of wage payments in 1874 and its adoption had become common by 1879.

Organisation almost disappeared during the bad years of 1877—79. Miners took a prominent part in the agitation to make employers responsible for compensation in accident cases. There was a partial reform in 1880. The South and West Yorks Miners' Association formally terminated the then existing sliding scale in 1881. There was a reorganisation in local unions, and Lancashire followed the Yorkshire lead. The Lancashire Miners' Federation was successfully established in 1882. Their 1883 Conference resolved that "the time has come when the working miners shall regulate the production of coal; that no collier or other underground worker shall work more than five days or shifts per week; and that the hours from bank to bank be eight per shift." Strikes were futile in the endeavour to give effect to this programme and resort was again taken to the policy of legislative regulation. Parliament in 1887, the result of Keir Hardie's successful lobbying, stopped the employment of boys under twelve years in the mines.

An endeavour was made to insert a clause in the Mines Regulation Act, 1887, limiting the day's work to eight hours, but it was rejected by the House of Commons by 159 votes to 104. During these years there were renewed efforts at organisation in Scotland. Michael Davitt, in a fiery crusade, had advocated nationalisation of the mines in 1884, and at a meeting in Lanark his chairman estimated that the Duke of Hamilton took in 1883 no less than £114,486 in royalties, or £9 10s. 9d. for every working miner in the Hamilton coal-fields. The Scottish Miners' Federation was formed in 1886, with Keir Hardie as secretary. The Miners' Federation of Great Britain was formed in 1888, and in the words of Sidney and Beatrice Webb [*History of Trade Unionism* (1920 Edn.)]:—"The outstanding feature of the trade union world between 1890 and 1920 has been the growing predominance . . . of the organised forces of the coal-miners." The policy of the Federation was directed against the sliding scale, and at the establishment of an eight hours' day. The Northumberland and Durham miners strongly adhered to the sliding scale principle, and were hostile to the eight hours' day, and actually held aloof until 1908, after the Eight Hours Act had been passed. The sliding scale was retained in South Wales until 1902, but they joined the Federation in 1899, shortly after the formation of the South Wales Miners' Federation. The first of the large scale miners' strikes took place in 1893 against a proposed 25 per cent reduction in wages. 400,000

men were at one time involved, the dispute lasting seventeen weeks. The Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1908 established the eight hours' day, the Act becoming applicable to South Wales the following year. Thus legislation for the first time directly interfered with the working hours of adult labour.

Efforts were renewed for a minimum wage owing to loss of wages due to men working in abnormal places and other reduction of allowances. This led to strikes in South Wales, involving 30,000 men, in 1910. The national coal strike took place in 1912 on the demand for district minimum rates, and for the first time owners and men met in national conference. A Minimum Wage Act was hastily passed, accepting the principle but omitting definite figures, and work was resumed after a six weeks' stoppage.

The outbreak of war, 1914, saw the Board of Trade empowered, under the Defence of the Realm Act, to take possession of the coal mines. This development resulted in the appointment of a Coal Controller in 1917, to prevent unrest among the miners among other duties, such as securing the greatest possible output of coal, etc.

The Coal Mines (Emergency) Act, 1919, made provisions as to profits under Government control. The Coal Industry Commission was appointed in this year under the presidency of Justice Sankey. An interim report was signed recommending :—

Reduction of hours from eight to seven per day, and subject to position of industry at end of 1920, a further reduction to six.

Reduction of surface workers' hours to 46 per week. Increase in wages, 2s. per shift to adults, 1s. to boys.

Presaged either nationalisation or a method of unification by national purchase and/or joint control.

The Government accepted the recommendation as to hours by the Coal Mines Act (1920). Wages recommendations were rejected. The Commission in the final report recommended :—  
(a) Immediate purchase of royalties by the State ; (b) The mines to be controlled by the State and to be purchased outright after three years' working. The six Labour representatives on the Commission generally agreed to these suggestions, but wished to include coke and by-product plants. The three miners' spokesmen did not agree to compensation to mineral owners, except where compassionate allowance might be necessary. The three mine-owners' representatives, together with Sir Allen Smith and Mr. Balfour, denied that nationalisation would be the salvation of the industry. They advocated the purchase of royalties (in 1924 the estimated amount payable in royalties was £6,430,000; Mr. Herbert Smith stating recently that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners receive £370,000 of this amount), and that State ownership of coal should be conducted through a Mines Department, assisted by a National

Advisory Council, representative of the owners and miners. Sir Arthur Duckham believed private enterprise was still the best means of working the industry, but favoured the acquisition of royalties. The Sankey Commission proved the inefficiency of capitalism and encouraged the miners to expect a share of control.

Owing to non-acceptance of demand for reduction in price of coal and increase of wages, the miners struck in October. The strike was settled by making the increased wage dependent on the value of export sales. In 1921 the mines were decontrolled. The Miners' lockout took place in April on the questions of a national settlement of wages and a national pool of profits. The "pool" was the miners' compromise when it was realised the Sankey Commission's findings would not be enforced. They suffered a crushing defeat owing to the "Black Friday" collapse. After a stoppage of thirteen weeks a settlement was agreed upon whereby the proceeds of the industry (excluding by-products plants) after deducting costs of production, should be distributed in agreed proportions between wages and profits, this distribution to be on a *district*, as distinct from a national, basis.

In 1924 the Buckmaster Court of Inquiry reports that the provision of a minimum wage should have precedence over profits, a new wages agreement, extending to June 30th, 1925, being signed in June. The mine-owners gave notice of the termination of the wages agreement from July 31st, 1925. The Macmillan Court of Inquiry endorses the owners' account of their economic embarrassment, but rejects the proposals for a new wage agreement.

The Government intervened, and the mine-owners under Government guarantee of profits (the "subsidy") agreed on July 30th to continue present wage rates for eight months. A Royal Commission in the meantime to "inquire into and report on the economic position of the coal industry and the conditions affecting it, and to make any recommendations for the improvement thereof."

The owners' proposals before the Commission will abolish the last traces of national regulation of wages. The weekly wages vary widely now, for instance £2 12s. 1d. in Scotland and £2 4s. 4d. in Lancashire. The owners' proposals would reduce Scotland to £2 5s. 10d. and Lancashire to £1 8s. 7d., hence increasing the disparities. Hours are to be increased, and a drastic cutting down of the numbers of miners employed is to follow. The Labour scheme proposed "That the coal industry should become an organisation for the production of coal, manufacturing electrical power on a very large scale, making both coke and smokeless fuel, and producing in addition gas, fuel oils, ammonium compounds, chemical base materials for tars and other by-products; and *that this transformed industry must be publicly owned.*"

Lord Londonderry recently suggested the ignoring of the Commission, and proposes direct negotiations between the owners and miners (in effect, separate bargaining for each pit); also the dissolution of the Mining Association. This, if accepted, would of course pave the way for a demand for the dissolution of the M.F.G.B. As a result of the bitter experiences of the past, the workers are not disposed to take a dispassionate and philosophical view of the relations between capital and labour, and Lord Londonderry's "olive branch" is not likely to be accepted. The miners have learnt the lesson of solidarity; the smashing of that solidarity is the owners' aim, pursued with relentless persistency. Let the workers be equally determined to put their plan into operation, by strengthening their organisation.

JOHN HAMILTON.

## THE COLLIER LAD'S LAMENT

*Printed by Wm. Pratt, 82 Digbeth, Birmingham—The Cheapest Song Warehouse in England*

*This "broadside" ballad, dating from the Hungry Forties, is quoted from "An Economic History of England, 1066-1874," by Charlotte M. Waters (Oxford University Press, 7s. 6d. net).*

**I**N taking of my walks on a cold  
winter's day,  
As thro' the Colliers' country I  
wended my way,  
I overheard a Collier Lad most bitterly  
he cried,  
'O how I rue the day that my poor  
father died.

'My father he worked in those pits  
here hard by,  
When he did get good wages we had no  
need to cry,  
But now the case is altered, the want  
of bread we know,  
And soon unto the workhouse we shall  
be forced to go.

'Myself and my poor brother in the  
morning we did go  
To work upon the coal-pit's bank all  
in the frost and snow,  
The little that we both do earn needless  
for to tell  
'Twill scarcely serve the one of us, the  
masters pay so well.

"When my father he was living no  
tommy-shops were there,  
He did receive good wages, and all  
things went on fair,  
And when on Saturday he come home,  
he to my mother said,  
'Come, let us go up into the town and  
buy our children bread.'

"But now the masters have the power  
to do just as they please,  
And the Collier he must labour hard,  
whilst they sit at home at ease,  
And when their labour it is done the  
master thus will say,  
'You will not get your full amount of  
wages paid to-day.'

"Five and sixpence for a good day's  
work it was a Collier's due,  
But now he thinks himself well off if  
he gets more than two,  
And if he grumbles at the price the  
master thus will say,  
'To the workhouse with your children,  
and there get better pay.'

"The masters reap the benefit of all the  
 Colliers do,  
 By forcing from them much more than  
 what's their due,  
 He does not think how they can live,  
 and little does he care,  
 As long as all his work is done, they  
 may live on the air.

"To the tommy-shop they are forced to  
 go for all that they do eat,  
 They are forced to take their wages  
 out in bread and cheese and meat,  
 And when on Saturday they do go  
 their wages to get paid,  
 The master says, 'The tommy do not  
 forget to-day.'

"If the Queen and all her Ministers they  
 all were for to come,  
 To live as these poor Colliers do, and  
 work underground,  
 And undergo the hardships and dangers  
 of the fire,  
 I think they'd make the Masters pay  
 them better for their hire.

"If Johnny Russell\* he was here and  
 worked upon the bank,  
 And Albert† he was doggy, 'cause he's  
 of higher rank,  
 I think one week would settle them,  
 and cause them thus to say,  
 'Let these poor Colliers have their  
 rights, and give them better pay.'

"But when I do grow up a man, if they  
 don't better pay,  
 I'll go and be a soldier for thirteen-  
 pence a day,  
 Before I'll work in those dark pits,  
 and others for to share  
 The benefit of what I earn in tommy-  
 shops and beer.

"But if anyone's offended at what I  
 now have said,  
 I only ask to give me work that I may  
 earn my bread,  
 And pay us well when we have done,  
 and then you soon shall see  
 We do not sit at home and pine, in  
 want and misery."

## TWICE SHOT DEAD

### An Incident of the Bavarian Revolution 1918-19

By Ernst Toller

*When he was in England a few weeks ago, Ernst Toller promised to send us a contribution for The PLEBS. Here it is—a grim little footnote to modern working-class history. It has been translated by Ivor Montagu.*

**I**N Stadelheim Prison I came across a comrade who had a deep red scar engraved vertically on his forehead, between the eyebrows. His name was Ludwig Spörer; he was a Munich baker's assistant. I learnt from others that he could neither speak nor hear. But I got him to write down his story for me

\* Lord John Russell.

† The Prince Consort.

on a scrap of paper. The paper is lost, so I had better give myself the trouble of writing the story out again.

The Bavarian Government took a man who had already twice suffered all the agonies of execution, who had already twice, in all but fact, had to die, put him on trial, condemned him, and threw him crippled into prison.

The Minister for Justice of that day was Müller-Meiningen.

I was a Red soldier, taken prisoner on the 2nd of May. The Whites took me to the Mattauer Brewery. I was brought into the presence of an officer, who took down particulars of my identity. Then I was handed over to a sergeant. He led me into the courtyard of a school. There he said, "Why waste time on formalities? Prisoner, stand up against that wall!" I placed myself against the wall without much realising what was happening. Certainly I was frightened, but everything went so quickly that I scarcely had time to think about it. The sergeant drew his revolver, took aim, and fired. . . .

I was lying in the courtyard. My head was bent backwards. I felt dizzy. My head was lying in a puddle. What had happened? I did some quick thinking. The sergeant took out his revolver, he aimed, he fired. I haven't dreamed it all. But I'm not dead. Very likely I'm only wounded. Where, I have no idea. I tried to get up. No, no, I mustn't do that. The sergeant is maybe sitting up there in his office, and he'll notice that I'm not dead yet. Then he'll come down and finish me off. I remained lying absolutely still.

How long passed I have no idea. Then I heard voices. "Hallo, there's a Bolsh." I could feel someone groping in my pocket, robbing me. I must have made some slight movement. Someone said, "Hi, you, he's still alive." "Then give him a finisher," said the other. I felt something cold touch my forehead.

When I awoke I was lying on an operating table in a great hall. Sisters and men in white overalls were going about. I could see their lips moving, but I could hear nothing. I tried to speak. Nothing happened. Suddenly I realised. Good God! I must be dead. What's to be done? What's to be done? I made signs. The men round me noticed that I could neither speak nor hear. I learnt everything from them by degrees.

The sergeant's shot had been turned by my cigarette-case, but I had lost consciousness from terror and shock. The soldier who tried to finish the job had set his revolver against my temples. But as my head was hanging backwards the bullet, instead of penetrating, had only grazed the forehead. The groove it made is so deep one can lay one's finger in it. They'd left me on the courtyard for

dead. In the evening more soldiers had come and thrown the dead bodies on to a wagon on which corpses were already lying. They'd taken them into Ostfriedhof. I must have moved as I was being put into the earth. Anyway a priest noticed something and had me sent down to the surgical ward.

"And then?" I wrote on the paper.

I came before the court. They sentenced me to fifteen months detention in a fortress for complicity in High Treason. They're taking me to the fortress to-morrow.

## MAKE A NOTE—

**C**LASS tutors and propagandists who want a handy summary of the facts relating to the Coal Crisis should get at once the latest addition to the Labour Research Dept.'s "Labour and Capital" Series—*The Coal Crisis: Facts from the Samuel Commission, 1925—26*, with a Foreword by Herbert Smith (special T.U. Edition 6d., postpaid 7d.).

With this little book—and a copy of this month's PLEBS—every student in our movement can (and should) equip himself to enlighten his fellows on the real facts of the situation, and so counter Boss Class Propaganda.

Copies can be obtained from The PLEBS. See to it that this book is on sale in every N.C.L.C. class.

## THE GENERAL COUNCIL'S LABOUR COLLEGE SCHEME

**A**S most readers of The PLEBS will by this time be aware, the General Council of the Trades Union Congress has decided to accept Lady Warwick's offer of the house and grounds of Easton Lodge, near Dunmow, for use as a residential Labour College; and plans are, we believe, already under discussion for making the necessary building additions, alterations, etc.

It is early yet to comment on the scheme. But we of the Plebs movement would indeed have forgotten what we have been working for during the past few years if we failed to express our satisfaction at this clear proof that the central body of the organised Trade Union movement is taking up the question of working-class education seriously; and to tender our own thanks to Lady Warwick for the generous gift which we believe was in part inspired by her keen interest in the work of The PLEBS.



A central residential College, under the auspices of the T.U.C. itself is surely a big step forward. Exactly how it will affect the London Labour College we do not yet know ; but we do most sincerely hope that no wasteful and unnecessary duplication of energy and effort is going to result. The comparative advantages of this or that geographical site for a College are, it seems to us, unimportant compared with the advantages of a single central institution, carried on entirely under Trade Union auspices and control, and aiming at meeting the needs of the whole Trade Union movement. The really important thing—and we hope this will be borne in mind from the very outset—is that *the College should be closely linked with the classes in every part of the country*, and that a unified scheme of education, by which students can pass from classes to College, and return to assist the classes after their term at College, should be established.

There is another development of the situation on which—naturally—we cannot forbear comment. Certain ladies and gentlemen prominently associated with Ruskin College are busily engaged in organising opposition to the idea of “removing Ruskin College from Oxford.” They have issued a circular letter which implies, if it does not actually express, hostility to the General Council’s Easton Lodge scheme, and which expresses the hope that “some means may be found of retaining Ruskin College in the city and enabling it to carry on its work there.” The signatories include Messrs. J. Lawson, M.P., H. B. Lees-Smith, M.P., A. D. Lindsay, Michael Sadler, and Mr. and Mrs. Sanderson Furniss.

## HAVE YOU BOOKED THE DATE ?

—JULY 10th to 24th—

### THE N.C.L.C. & PLEBS NATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL AT COBER HILL, nr. SCARBOROUGH

*The Annual Meetings of both the N.C.L.C. and the PLEBS LEAGUE will be held during the School. This year the Plebs League is not running a special Summer School, but is co-operating in making the N.C.L.C. School the gathering of the year.*

#### YOU MUST BE THERE

The fee per week (including board) is £3 3s. (College Secretaries, Tutors, Class Secretaries, etc. £3). Send your booking fee of 15s. (in part payment) to the N.C.L.C., 62, Hanover Street, Edinburgh. If you reside in London, you can hand your fee in to The PLEBS Office. The fee for a week or a fortnight may be paid by instalments. Begin now !

An "explanatory note" enclosed with the letter states that:—"Oxford possesses many advantages to a College like Ruskin which could not be obtained elsewhere. The College is in contact with many interests, social as well as educational." It is further mentioned that "Ruskin College at present receives financial aid from several sources: this would probably be cut off if the College were transferred from a University centre, and especially if it were linked up with educational work of a purely propagandist type."

We are glad that these advocates of contact with University culture realise so clearly—and fight so shy of—the aims of a real Labour College; and we congratulate the General Council on having provoked their manifesto. If Ruskin College still stands for the kind of education these people believe in, then it is to be hoped that it will remain in Oxford—its spiritual home—as an institution entirely separate and distinct from the Labour College of the Trade Union movement. That College's task will be to serve the needs of the Labour movement. And for that job neither Oxford "tradition" nor Oxford finance is needed.

J. F. H.\*

## LETTERS

IS THE N.C.L.C. ACADEMIC?

**D**EAR COMRADE,—The article in the February issue, "Are we too Academic?" is a complete travesty of the present-day work of the N.C.L.C. The curriculum of the local colleges, inspired by the National Executive, is framed in the main on a concentration of the study of MODERN social problems, a *brief* survey of past history being the necessary introduction to this. And no tutor worth his salt can ignore modern problems, e.g., the mining crisis, when teaching Industrial History and Economics, still the principal subject in our classes. I question whether, even in the early days of the movement, there was any particular focussing of attention on the conditions of the silver miners of Ancient Greece to the exclusion of considering the why and wherefore of the conditions of modern workers.

As one who knows intimately what subjects are being principally taught and studied throughout our movement,

I can only conclude J. M. Williams has been in cloistered seclusion and has just emerged blinking after a Rip Van Winkle slumber.

Yours fraternally,

JOHN HAMILTON.

IS THE N.C.L.C. ACADEMIC?

**D**EAR COMRADE,—The article which appeared last month over the signature of J. M. Williams seems tragic, for if this comrade ever attended any Labour Classes, his article shows that he has not even grasped the first principles of clear thinking. To build up such a wholesale condemnation of Independent Working-Class Education on such unverified assumptions classifies all his censure as rubbish—though harmful.

Firstly his own brilliant use of the English language was not obtained either in the pit or the factory, yet he objects to other workers acquiring the powerful weapon he wields so adroitly, the only pity being that the thoughts expressed are not equally

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\*It should be noted that, as there has been as yet no opportunity for the N.C.L.C. Executive or the Plebs Executive to discuss the matters dealt with in this article, it is necessarily an "unofficial" comment.

brilliant, and here we agree that this demonstrates that ability to use English is a danger if unaccompanied by knowledge.

He rushes into print without having acquainted himself with the organisation he criticises, otherwise he would know that the N.C.L.C. does not issue the pamphlets and books of the movement, which is the work of The PLEBS, and he might have made this criticism definite so that people could judge how much was in it. He gives a "vista of problems," such as the Dawes Report, the Chinese Rebellion, Reparations, Russia, the Industrialisation of Backward Countries, Over-Capitalisation of Industry, and the relation of Wages and Profits To-day, and says grandly "Here is work for the N.C.L.C."

Nearly every problem there can only be dealt with by one having a knowledge of economics, and I do not think he can produce one N.C.L.C. syllabus of classes which does not include classes on economics, and indeed on the special subjects he mentions. It is two years since the Dawes Report first received attention in this district, and it would be amusing to hear Mr. Williams explaining the "Dawes Plan" to the workers if he has not studied economics. And yet he implies that the study of economics and history is a waste of time. He talks about the "elimination of Capitalism instead of the explanation of Capitalism" being the aim. Has he just newly discovered that this is what the Labour Movement exists for?

Yours fraternally,  
ARTHUR WOODBURN.

DEAR SIR,—The writer of the article "Are We Too Academic?" suggests that any subjects which do not have a direct bearing on problems of the hour are a waste of time and a waste of funds. He argues that the industrial struggle of 1926 is so vital, so urgent, that the whole force of the N.C.L.C. should be turned to this and to this alone. He gives examples of things he thinks wholly unnecessary in the present curriculum of the classes. English, says he, is a matter of grammarians splitting hairs over split infinitives! All the English that the workers want is the brief sentence "Go to hell" (to

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be used, let me hasten to add, as salutation to employers!).

Well, perhaps the workers themselves have different ideas of English and the teaching of English. To some, at least, English means rather more than recognising a split infinitive. It is the medium by which the great mass of knowledge reaches their minds; it is the means by which (when skilfully used) one man convinces another of the unfairness of the present system, of the need of change or of the stupidity in allowing it to continue. To learn to express oneself in clear convincing English is, in short, so vital to many of us, that classes which provide facilities for practice (both spoken and written) and guidance from more experienced users of our mother tongue become fundamental, not only to all other branches of knowledge, but to actually assist in the struggle of our generation.

Now it is admittedly true that a clear knowledge of present day problems is of the utmost importance, that we should understand fully what the Dawes Plan is meaning to Europe, or how

the Chinese rebellion is the somewhat belated effect of certain causes with which we have long been familiar. But J. M. Williams must admit that these subjects are not attractive (as yet) to all workers—in fact, to only a very small proportion of them. And since the N.C.L.C. cannot force the workers to attend its instruction, it must perforce administer it in such ways as the workers find they are able to absorb it. Anyone who has done any public speaking or teaching knows that information can only wisely be given in very small doses. An idea that is somewhat new to the audience must be given first in one form and then presented from a different angle, and yet again sent home by the help of a simile chosen from the life of the people, through which they can more readily see the application of the truth being taught. Is it not so with the Labour College Movement? We have new matter to present, but the methods by which we send forth our message must be legion. One man's meat is another man's poison in the mental world as well as the physical, and a study of Biology may quite possibly make a man a Socialist when Economics would only bore him.

It is, moreover, a dangerous fallacy that you can make more rapid progress by concentrating on a narrow curriculum. During the great religious struggle of the Middle Ages, the Puritans concentrated intensely on literal renderings of the Bible, living their daily lives by a perverted application of certain passages till all joy of life was stifled and religion came to mean suppression, not control, of natural instincts, and anything that was difficult and unpleasant was therefore holy. Of course this defeated itself!

It is one of the sad things of life that the most earnest self-sacrificing workers in a "Cause" tend by the very intensity of their ardour to become narrow. That possibly is inevitable and they, as individuals, are tremendously valuable as the great driving force, and for a big movement like ours we need terrific driving force. But let not the movement itself be thus.

Yours fraternally,

E. THOMPSON.

CLASS-CONSCIOUS OXFORD

DEAR COMRADE,—I read with interest Com. Greenidge's comments on my Oxford article.

I note his agreement that Oxford is a class-conscious university; but he attributes this more to the personnel of the university than to its curriculum.

I don't think Greenidge has a very clear idea of what Socialism really means, for he confuses it with Political Democracy—quite a different thing. How otherwise can one explain his reference to Bentham and Mill as two writers who helped to convert him to Socialism? Both of these gentlemen were stalwart champions of individual enterprise.

Marx's debt to Hegel is indisputable; but it was to Hegel, the logician, the formulator of a new logical method, that he was indebted, not to Hegel the sociologist, whose juggernaut conception of the state he repudiated, as indeed would any socialist.

Greenidge's defence of the inclusion of Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics* (both products of a pre-scientific age) in a course for modern students of Politics is that the works in question "were the best that a great, if distant, age could offer." I would put it rather differently, and say that these and other works are included because the Oxford authorities still regard Politics not as a science, but as a static branch of knowledge, an art—the art of governing other people! If Greenidge disagrees, I would ask him to imagine if he can a Professor of Chemistry at a modern University solemnly telling his class that the text books for the year would be Boyle's *Sceptical Chemist* (1662), Lavoisier's *Traite de Chemie* (1779), and Dalton's *New System of Chemical Philosophy* (1808)—all classics in the past history of chemistry.

As I stated in my article, Oxford is pre-eminently a university for the training of a governing class: not, I might add, a university for the production of technical experts—that is the work of the provincial universities. If Greenidge knew a little less about classical literature and a little more about the Class Struggle he would realise that there is a great deal more in the Oxford curriculum than appears on the surface.

Yours frat., HAROLD R. HUTCHISON.

As announced last month we are issuing, by arrangement with the author, a Special PLEBS Edition of a new book by

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J. H. T. AND J. T. W. N.

DEAR COMRADE,—It is pleasant to learn from Mr. Newbold's letter, in your last issue, that he differs from Mr. J. H. Thomas at any rate on one point.

Still more interesting is his confidential implication that on this point it is Mr. Thomas who is "on the side of the angels."

Yours fraternally,

M. H. D.

MARCEL SEMBAT

DEAR EDITOR,—I see that Marcel Sembat's book *Defeated Victory* is reviewed in the February PLEBS. The brazen and very convenient forgetfulness of these old men is astonishing. Your reviewer says: "Sembat saw the unity of the Party he had lived for broken as a deliberate piece of policy by Moscow," and gives a supporting quotation. Sembat is talking nonsense. The question of joining the Moscow Internationale was discussed day after day in *l'Humanité* from all points of view, and by spokesmen of all tendencies

during the entire autumn of 1920; I have never seen a question so thoroughly discussed in any Labour paper in the world. And the result was that three-quarters of the then Unified Socialist Party (whose membership was at that time, I think, about 140,000), by a completely constitutional vote decided for affiliation to Moscow. How could any body of men sitting in Moscow compel 100,000 Frenchmen in France to join the Third International against their will? The split was caused because Sembat and his pro-war section of the Party had always been hostile to the Soviet Revolution, and had defamed the Bolsheviks on every possible occasion—I have scores of French papers proving this.

Before me lies the issue of *l'Humanité* of 1st April, 1918. On the front page is a two-column leading article by Marcel Sembat strenuously advocating the infamous proposal of intervention in Russia by a Japanese army!

Yours faithfully,

A. P. L.

## NOTES BY THE WAY

### *Articles to Note*

Those who wish to understand the present economic situation in Russia and the issues in the recent controversy inside the R.C.P. should not fail to read the very clear and admirable discussion of the situation by Buharin, published in the January *Labour Monthly*. The position of the rich and middle peasants in the villages, and the problems of revived class division; the position of the co-operatives and State industry, and the difference between State capitalism and Socialist industry are among the questions dealt with:

A detailed and very fair examination of the Social Democratic policy in Austria after the war (as described by the Viennese Social-Democrat, Otto Bauer) in No. 16 of *The Communist International* is another article which should not be missed, especially by those who are discussing the problems of a Labour Parliamentary Government. The article shows how bold Marxian language and aims can become in practice a policy of damping-down the class struggle and "go-slow," so

as to give capitalism a breathing space, when the leaders of the movement have no sound conception of the class struggle as a struggle first and foremost for *power*. This article makes a useful additional reference for the last chapter of the European History Textbook.

The February number of *The Labour Monthly* contains an introduction by Prof. Riazonov to some articles by Marx on China, which are to appear in subsequent numbers. Every student of our *Imperialism* and *Economic Geography* Textbooks should get hold of the December *L. Monthly* with the article by Marx on British Rule in India.

The January Economic History Number of *The Economic Journal* has an article giving useful results of original research into the condition of the Lancashire Tool Trade at the end of the eighteenth century. This shows by detailed quotations from letters and memorandum books how under the Domestic System the workers had been reduced by debt to complete subjection to the merchant-manufacturer. The

smallmaster workmen, though working on their own in their own shops with apprentices, on work given out to them by the merchant manufacturer, were nearly all in debt to their employers, and often for this reason were forced to sign an undertaking not to work for any other employer. Tutors should find excellent material here for illustrations of the state of this period.

*The International Trade Union Review* (Oct.-Dec. 25) has a very useful summary of conditions and recent events in China from a trade union standpoint. In the same issue appears an article reply by M. Starr to a French comrade who had advocated that the solution of the problem of language diversity was for all trade unionists to learn English, French and German!

#### *Trade Union History*

The *A. E. U. Monthly Journal* is noteworthy for a long series of articles by Charles Gregory on the Class Struggle in history. The largeness of the scale on which he is working allows a vast mass of detail concerning, for example, the conquest of India, and the suppression of the early Radical and Trade Union movements, which are a boon to students unable to get access to the authorities used. In the last two issues of the same journal, Com. A. B. Swales has given his impressions of Mexico;

and in the November issue there are reproduced the old banners of the Greenock Branch which has an unbroken history from 1831 onwards. The banner pictures of the millwrights and of the first engines which they made—in addition to a bust of Watt and the slogan "We work by art"—reveal a pride of craft which has been seriously undermined by subsequent changes in industry. Perhaps an engineer reader could suggest a modern banner—something with standardised motor parts and a Labour Exchange in it seems indicated.

#### *Inter Ni*

Those who met Comrade Bertolt at the Training Centre and who read his description of the Danish Movement in our September issue will be interested to know that his history of Labour organisation in Denmark has just been published. If any comrade can read Danish he would oblige us by a summary and review.

#### *Worth Noting*

Those comrades who use Thomas More's *Utopia* to enliven their description of the England of the sixteenth century should note Kautsky's article on "The Position of Utopia" in the November *Socialist Review* in which he summarises some of the findings of his special book on this great forerunner of Socialism.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### TROTSKY'S NEW BOOK

*Where is Britain Going?* by L. Trotsky (Allen and Unwin, 2s. 6d.).

**T**HIS book is a mixture of two almost opposite characteristics. Trotsky has possibly the most powerful and clear Marxist mind in the Labour movement to-day, certainly the bitterest pen. But he knows nothing of Britain except what he has learnt by assiduous reading of British journals and books. When he was in London, he tells us in his book on Lenin, he never went among the English. He confined himself strictly to the Russian colony: Lenin it was who had the curious fantasy of mingling with the natives in their

political meetings. Since he knows Britain from books only, and relies upon his logical faculty to carry him through, his conclusions are sometimes strikingly true; sometimes, when they are based on wrong premises they are equally strikingly absurd. At one time we are listening to a great international revolutionary leader; at another we seem to be hearing a Grand Lama or other innocent foreigner whose naive comments are taken down and published by tittering capitalist reporters.

In his history of the British Labour movement he makes some plain errors of fact, due to his anxiety to prove that British Labour's progress has

been entirely due to foreign revolutionary movements. For example :

The war against France (1793-1815) was popular only among the governing classes ; the masses of the people sympathised with the French revolution and demonstrated their anger with the Pitt government. The formation of the British Trade Unions was in a large measure inspired by the influence of the French Revolution on the British working masses.

Unfortunately, all this is untrue. The "common people" of England were a Church and King mob who zealously hounded Priestley and Paine and enthusiastically backed the war on the "Frenchies." There is not one single particle of evidence that the rise of the trade union movement was caused or even influenced by the French Revolution. Similarly, in 1848 we have a case where actually a British revolutionary movement was spurred by Continental revolts—but, unfortunately, Trotsky says the Chartist collapse was due to the collapse of the foreign revolutions, whereas in fact it came months earlier.

Again, he claims that the granting of the franchise to town workers in 1867 was due to the American Civil War. If so, he has made a remarkable historical discovery for which some evidence should be produced.

Finally, he claims that "without doubt" the great electoral victories of the Labour Party in the famous 1906 election was due to the abortive Russian Revolution of 1905. Those who took part in that campaign will be the most astonished to hear this, I think.

In the question of religion, again, he is dominated by Russian experience, and the recollection of the Tsarist Church, which was nothing more than a second line of police. For this reason he quotes Kirkwood's famous dictum :

I have nothing to envy the Prince of Wales. I am in perfect health. I have no one to answer to but my Maker.

But he does not see that the first two sentences are a witty, if rather plain-spoken, attack on the Heir Apparent. He only sees the last sentence, and regards it as absolute proof that Kirkwood is enslaved to superstition ! Similarly he has a long

argument with Lansbury, which he must have enjoyed writing. It is the sort of argument we all have in our dreams, where we are always alternately witty and crushing, the other fellow makes all the blunders and says just what we want him to, all our jokes come off and all his fall flat, and so on. But just because he does not trouble to understand Lansbury's position on force, he will convert nobody. There is very little point in being funny because Lansbury says he does not "believe in force" and pretending that you think he means that he doesn't believe that force exists at all ! I believe, with Trotsky, that Lansbury is mistaken—but I do not believe that Trotsky has explained why in a manner that would convince any worker whose mind was not already made up.

Finally—and then I have done with the task of criticism—Trotsky's proposal (p. 141) that all members of Trade Unions who do not subscribe to the political levy for the "social traitors of the Labour Party" should be expelled and struck against as blacklegs, is highly unwise. If this were taken seriously it would mean that one-third and more of the membership of some of the biggest trade unions would have to be excluded and fought against as blacklegs. The Trade Union movement might be blown sky high by this rather unexpected enthusiasm.

But as when he is wrong, Trotsky is very wrong, when he is right he is very right. And he is right in what is the main theme, after all, of his book. Further, his writing is very clear : his wit, unlike some of his colleagues, is really witty. He skins Mr. MacDonald neatly time and again. His comments upon the fatuous leading articles in the *Herald* make one squirm, partly for joy of their aptness, partly for shame at the downfall of the great little paper. He often can illuminate whole periods of history by one sentence :

In Cromwell, Luther shakes hands with Robespierre.

He can indicate the true policy by the briefest of sentences :

In the decisive struggle the British bourgeoisie will avail themselves of the most powerful support of the bourgeoisie of the United States, while the working class will base



itself mainly on the working class of Europe and the oppressed peoples of the British colonies.

What magnificent essays could be written on these two sentences! Space is limited, so I must close with one more quotation which gives admirably the whole position:—

The dread of revolution drove the British capitalists along the road of concessions and reorganisation so long as the British bourgeoisie, thanks to their world position, retained gigantic sources of manœuvring in their own hands. They could legalise trade unions, repeal the Corn Laws, raise wages, extend the electoral law, institute social reforms, and so forth. But in Britain's present radically changed world position the threat of revolution has no longer force to drive the bourgeoisie forward; on the contrary, it paralyses the last remnants of their industrial initiative. What is necessary now is not the threat of revolution, but the revolution itself.

I had intended to quote a passage on pages 104 to 105 concerning the probable fortunes of the next Labour government. But I find it is too long. Get the book and study it yourself.

R. W. P.

#### HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

*An Economic History of England, 1066—1874.* By C. M. Waters (Oxford University Press, 7s. 6d.).

Amidst a great output of school-books which falsify history to fortify Imperialist reaction, this book by a late headmistress of a County School is exceedingly welcome. The usual book always makes a "mob" rush the Bastille; Chartism is summarily dismissed with a reference to the later lunacy of O'Connor; Black Friday of 1921 is welcomed as a foiling of the influences of foreign gold; Germany's lust for world power alone is blamed for the World War 1914—18; and even the League of Nations is viewed with suspicion in comparison to the real League, the British Empire! It is true that Miss Waters does not cover recent history and her angle of approach is primarily the economic; but she shows such a wholehearted fidelity to the facts of history and such a sympathetic insight into its development,

and she is so free from nationalist and ruling class bias, that her book ought to be widely known to all students and teachers of social history.

An outstanding feature is the excellence of the illustrations, which number over 200, and make one wish for their reproduction as lantern slides. Another praiseworthy feature—which the increasing number of women students in N.C.L.C. classes will welcome—is the especial attention given to the position of women throughout the ages.

Excellent arrangement of detail and a good index add to the book's value.

M. S.

#### SECRET SERVICE

*The Sarajevo Crime.* By M. E. Durlam (Allen and Unwin, 7s. 6d.).

*The Underworld of State.* By Stan Harding (Allen and Unwin, 7s. 6d.).

Miss Durham sets out to prove that the Serbian Government instigated the murder of the Archduke Ferdinand, and that the Great War was fought in order to cover the tracks of Serbia's secret service organisation, "The Black Hand." If one feels inclined to be superior about "these dirty Balkan politics," Mrs. Stan Harding's book on the doings of a U.S.A. secret agent, receiving money and protection from both England and Russia, shows that every civilised country is in the game. Recent arrests in Paris complete the dismal picture drawn by these two books. Here a woman, forgetting for the moment she is a spy and becoming just a jealous lover, "blows the gaff" on her two associates, and the world is treated to the spectacle of two nations who have just protested eternal friendship endeavouring to hush-up arrests that couldn't be avoided. Both are aware that each is spying on the other, but it wouldn't do to shock the average elector with that cynical fact. The Secret Service is generally regarded as an unfortunate necessity, with a spice of romance that justifies

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*We regret that pressure on our space compels us to hold over the concluding instalment of Philips Price's "Christianity and the Class Struggle" until next month.*

it—raw material for Messrs. Oppenheim and Buchan. These two books show the glamour to be but the iridescence on a foul cesspool of intrigue and lying, which poisons international relationships and actively works against Peace and Understanding that might prove fatal to its own job.

E. C. W.

#### THE REASONABLE REVOLUTIONIST

*Revolution by Reason.* By John Strachey (Parsons, 2s. 6d. paper, 7s. 6d. cloth).

There are a few things necessary for the changing of a social system :

(1) to recognise there is a change necessary ; (2) to analyse the defects ; (3) to devise a remedy ; (4) to carry the remedy into effect.

Mr. Strachey has effectively demonstrated No. 1, he has also analysed many of the defects of the capitalist system in a way with which no one can disagree who studies the matter objectively. He has gone further and stated a remedy. What Mr. Strachey considers original in his book is his contribution to No. 4. He says :

"The instruments, the keys of economic power, without which the transformation cannot be effected, must be acquired, not *gradually* but by a single decisive act, for without the possession of economic power the hands of democracy are tied behind its back."

Mr. Strachey's "Birmingham Proposals," therefore, according to that statement, are useless unless by a single act they transfer economic power from the hands of the capitalists to the workers. These proposals are the Nationalisation of the Banks, and the control of raw materials by a Council which will endeavour to control prices and production. The Banks will issue credit to the industrial capitalists to make up the present wage to the minimum wage, and otherwise things will go on in the ordinary way of business, except that the increased trade, consequent upon the increased purchasing power, will wipe out unemployment and raise the general standard of living.

These are things we would all like to see happen, and if they are not practicable, they are entitled to be

criticised whether the critic suggests any other plan or not.

One of the great weaknesses of the book is the fact that Mr. Strachey takes the quantity theory of money, and assumes that all prices alter according to that, and nothing else is mentioned. Supply and demand, according to him, decides the price of goods, and conversely the scarcity of goods causes a glut in money. Does Mr. Strachey really think that a scarcity of goods would make the price of gold come below the cost of its production? Even supply and demand theorists recognise that it would not be produced unless it could sell at a profit, or at least at cost. The prices of butter, eggs, wheat, iron and coal are not decided by whether the bankers create more or less money. The prices of these things expressed in

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terms of gold are decided by their value, and that value is decided by the necessary labour time and what profit each manufacturer can secure from the social total profit or surplus value. It follows that if the labour time can be reduced the price should fall, or if gold takes longer to produce prices in general should fall. This law can only take effect so long as the tokens such as coin and notes are kept to the amount which would circulate if gold were the only medium. If it goes beyond this, through the printing of extra notes or the issue of loans from nothing, called by the banks "credit," or by the passing of counterfeit money by coiners and forgers, it becomes inflation and tends to raise prices in general.

*What is inflation?*—The production and distribution of goods are supposed

to be governed by certain rules, which roughly stated are these:

That everyone who produces wealth should be allowed to exchange that for equal wealth.

This goes at present through a process where an intermediary, called money, which is theoretically based on gold, is a recognised measure of value. Hence the process would appear thus:—

Goods produced are exchanged for equal value in gold which in turn is exchanged for equal value in other goods.

Gold in practice is replaced by notes, coins and a system of accounting, but even this is supposed to regulate the exchange of goods for equal goods. If, however, a counterfeiter introduces into the middle stage some counterfeit coin, instead of the gold, then he obviously is cheating the producer who accepts these as a token of equal value. This loss will probably be spread around, but where inflation or the introduction of money which does not really represent wealth takes place, someone is being robbed of his wealth. Such counterfeiters are put into prison. However, the regulation of this money is under the control of the Government and the Banks, and either or both of them can do the same thing as the counterfeiter; but their action is legal, and is called "creating credits," and they lend or borrow faked money with which they obtain goods from people who cannot tell it from real money. When, owing to better methods, prices fall, inflation can still take place by a corresponding creation of fake money or credit, so that stabilisation of prices is not desirable. Mr. Strachey, then, proposes that a Socialist Government should nationalise this ability to create fake money, and distribute it in the form of increased wages to the workers, who would in turn create a demand for more goods. This would absorb the unemployed to some extent, and increase the general standard of life.

There is little question that the power of modern money will have to be used by any Socialist Government, but the proposal referred to is simply taxation of the ruling classes for the benefit of the workers, and taxation is called "confiscation" when imposed by a Socialist Government. Banks are international in character, and confiscation of their rights to rob will become

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## FOYLES

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an international question, and therefore a question of whether Britain can feed itself and guarantee its imports of necessities against, say, Pierpont Morgan and America. It comes back to Mr. Strachey's original statement that "the instruments, the keys of economic power, . . . must be acquired not gradually, but by a single decisive act." Economic power lies not, however, in book-keeping entries or pound notes, but in hard material things like food, cotton, etc., which have to be imported into this country. The single decisive act will have to be an international one to be effective, and that brings us back to the title of Mr. Strachey's book. A revolution which means the seizure of power from an international ruling class, will require to have very powerful reasons to convince that ruling class that their abdication is necessary.

A. W.

### A NOTABLE BOOK

*Free Thought in the Social Sciences.*  
By J. A. Hobson (Allen & Unwin, 10s.).

This vigorous, ironic, subtle and fearless inquiry into the nature of bias

in the social sciences I recommend to PLEBS readers. It offers quite the most thoroughgoing justification of our criticism of capitalist educational orthodoxy I have ever read. Mr. Hobson displays the existing intellectual framework as being honeycombed by a racial, nationalist and class bias more subtle and insidious than we have been apt to regard it. He refutes the crude view that the conservative colouring of orthodox thought is due either to overt intimidation on the part of the possessing classes or to personal self-interest. On the contrary, teachers and thinkers are not the conscripts but the volunteers of reaction. There are numerous psychological reasons, here brilliantly analysed, which account for this fact, sufficient to show that the charge of conscious deceit and hypocrisy is wide of the mark. It is a too, too simple view to take that all capitalists are wicked, and all economists insincere. If our enemies were knaves, how easy would it be for honest men to come into their own!

Mr. Hobson considers that a disinterested psychology, stripping the veil from these secret processes which colour our thinking, would prove the worst enemy of conservatism, and hence that strong attempts will be made in the future to distort the work of this science. He regards the open victimisation of radical economists in America as less dangerous to free thought than the less obvious methods of control employed in this country, since the pride of the scientific spirit is aroused in their defence.

But Mr. Hobson's purpose is not solely to expose the rationalisation process amongst the lackeys of reaction, but to summon us to free and disinterested thought. His book is a mental purgative for socialists as well as for conservatives. The pressure of secret biases and emotions colours our theoretical attack as powerfully as their intellectual defence. It is fashionable in some quarters to take the motto of The PLEBS too literally and deny the possibility of impartiality in the social sciences. Is this not simply a rationalisation of instinctive and interested belief, too? We see clearly that orthodox education is biased and that the most effective method of combating it is by a strong socialist pull in the

opposite direction. Hence we declare that bias is inevitable and omnipresent, and that impartiality is a sham.

I think, with Mr. Hobson, that the facts of the growth of the scientific habit of mind are against that facile (and to us comforting) view. Some rare minds do rise superior to the fog of prejudice and interest. On the other hand, the propaganda and theory of rebel movements are likely to contain a greater amount of objective truth than those of the vested interests; and in the present primitive state of man's self-knowledge and self-control we may perhaps acquiesce in the method of achieving increments of truth through the conflict of rebel with conservative bias. But it is a wasteful method, leading to excesses, and it can never appeal to those who prize intellectual integrity above group loyalty. Mr. Hobson is in the line of the great champions of the scrupulous scientific temper which includes the best of the liberal rationalists of the last century, and which ever attracts the intellectual free-lance who is impatient of all orthodoxy, whether capitalist or proletarian. I am far from stating that any impartial truths about the social sciences yet exist, or are likely to until we have got economic equality, but it is the attitude and approach to problems that really count, and in these I suggest, with no dread of excommunication, we should be as scientific and impartial as we can.

J. L. G.

PATRIOTISM COLDLY CONSIDERED  
*Patriotism is not Enough.* By John Haynes Holmes (Allen & Unwin).

Although admitting that the War was "a complex of multitudinous forces—political, diplomatic, economic, social, spiritual, of which the economic were undoubtedly the most important," this American writer contends that so far as the masses were concerned, patriotism was the central fact.

"On both sides of the battle-line men identified the ideals of freedom with the interests of their own particular nation"—with what tragically ironic results we know. "Man was betrayed by his own best self," and it is with the purpose of solving the contradiction between the nobility of patriotism and the ignoble ends which

it serves that this book has been written. Patriotism in its inception is shown as the animal instinct which prompts the bird to defend its nest, and its ever widening range of application to the family, the clan, the tribe, and ultimately to the nation is demonstrated, with the assertion that the logic of history now demands a wider patriotism which shall embrace mankind.

Adjustments of social vision are not made by means of generalities, however, so the author carefully analyses the passion in its present phase of development, and shows how the defence complex of patriotism is utilised by capitalist governments for the purpose of fomenting and conducting wars of aggression.

It is customary to think of patriotism in its simple form of "love of country," but inextricably bound up with that sentiment to-day is the idea of loyalty—loyalty to the State as the organised governmental agency of the country. It is this fealty to the State which can turn a peace-loving people into warriors, and which makes possible the wholesale exploitation of the resources of nations for the ultimate benefit of the controlling few. "They have bound the people with vast systems of universal conscription, silenced them with espionage decrees, threatened them with the constant menace of martial law, suspension of constitutional guarantees, etc.; and the people have either been deceived, or have enthusiastically agreed, because armaments, conscription, martial law, are instruments of State, and the State must be obeyed."

In the face of this exacted loyalty individual thought becomes sedition. "Scoop out the brains of a hundred million people, blind their eyes, and palsy their tongues, wire them to the currents of court decisions, war department propaganda, and eighth-grade history teaching, and you have a nation of perfect patriots."

Morality also disappears. "In the realm of personal social life, men do not lie, steal, bear false witness, covet, kill, but in the realm of international life men lie and call it diplomacy, steal and call it annexation, bear false witness and call it an official statement, covet and call it 'manifest destiny,' kill and call it war."

It is not patriotism—love of country—then, which makes for evil, but

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loyalty to the State, and since the State was made for man, is nothing in itself, and is entitled to fidelity only while it fulfils the purposes of human service for which it was originally created, this loyalty should be withdrawn when occasion demands. "Revolution," the logical outcome of such withdrawal, "is the people's law of self-defence," said Senator Borah, in 1919, and Abraham Lincoln gave authority for the same in 1869 when he said: "This country with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it, or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it."

Although the author seems to shirk the issue arising out of the repudiation of the State, and tends to become wholly idealistic in the final chapters, there are indications that he never loses sight of the economic changes that will be necessary before the new patriotism, a real love of humanity, can come to birth.

V. W.

A PIONEER OF MODERN HISTORY  
*Gibbon*. By J. M. Robertson (Watts &  
Co., 2s.).

Most of our students and teachers have not sufficient time when dealing with Roman history to read or treat the subject upon the scale of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*. Maybe they—like the reviewer—will have to wait until they get to Wormwood Scrubs, where Gibbon's book will be again a godsend for weary weekends. However, because of the use of the book for reference and because of the author's break with supernaturalism in history this biography of Gibbon is worth while.

Mr. Robertson takes to task many of the biographers and critics of his subject and makes his own valuation. While he rejects Gibbon's error in calling Christianity the *cause* of the decay of the Roman Empire, he claims that his work makes clear the Nemesis of Imperialism and was a useful pioneer application of the rationalist and sceptical viewpoint to history. To a large extent Gibbon was influenced by the French thinkers who, as forerunners of the French Revolution, undermined many existing superstitions.

It is well that Mr. Robertson gives most of his attention to Gibbon's work, for the man himself—the fat boozing placeman of Lord Worth—affords but little material for an inspiring life-story. Here is a touch of irony akin to that of Gibbon himself on p. 94: "It is told of certain tribes of the Australian aborigines that among them it is usual for a man to make a woman his wife by knocking her down and carrying her off senseless; and those wooers doubtless argue that that is clearly the way to preserve the species. The European who is so unaffectedly aghast at their psychology is not immeasurably distant from them in his sociology, while he reasons that the only way to convey culture from the higher level to the lower is by murderous conquest."

M. S.

As we go to press, Ness Edwards sends us a copy of his *John Frost and the Chartist Movement in Wales*, price 1/- (1/1 postpaid from author, 111 Oak Street, Abertillery, Mon.). All students of working-class history should make a note of this.

## The NATIONAL COUNCIL of LABOUR COLLEGES

HEAD OFFICE—62 HANOVER STREET, EDINBURGH

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

**N**ATIONAL Union Schemes: All class students are urged to see that the question of N.C.L.C. Educational Schemes is raised at the conferences of all those Unions that do not yet have N.C.L.C. Schemes. Under the T.U.C. Scheme, it is provided that Unions may arrange Educational Schemes directly with the N.C.L.C. Please keep Head Office advised of any activities with regard to a proposed scheme that may be taking place.

*Shop Assistants' Union*.—The Edinburgh Branch has submitted a resolution for the forthcoming Conference asking the Executive to arrange a scheme. No doubt our supporters

throughout the country will give all their assistance.

*General Secretary's Tour*.—During the month, the General Secretary spoke at Wellingborough under the auspices of the Northants Boot and Shoe Operatives. He also spoke at Llanelly, Skewen and Aberavon. It is hoped that our stalwarts in the Boot and Shoe Operatives throughout the country will ensure that the Union's Educational Scheme is placed with the N.C.L.C.

Heartiest thanks to all those comrades who helped to make the meetings a success. It is hoped that more extensive N.C.L.C. work will result.

*New Local Affiliations during January*:—Leigh, 4; Fife, 4; Glasgow, 3;

London, 3; Cardiff, 3; Bradford, 2; Liverpool, 2; Nottingham, 2; Woolwich, 1; S.E. Lancs. (other than Leigh), 1; Stirlingshire, 1; Dundee, 1; Belfast, 1.

If your College is not in the above list do what you can to ensure that it will be next month.

Most of the above affiliations are on the twopence per member, minimum 5s., basis, providing free access to classes and representation. This is now the local affiliation fee in nearly every area where the N.C.L.C. does extensive educational work, and in addition has been adopted in areas where a scattered population limits the amount of educational work that can be done. Those Colleges which have not yet adopted this fee should immediately consider doing so. Full particulars can be had from the N.C.L.C. Office.

*What the Divisions are Doing*

**Div. 1.**—Three new classes have started at Finsbury, Hornsey and Stoke Newington. It is expected that another one will be formed—for the first time—at Ramsgate. Nine branch classes are now running in addition to the usual district classes. The February Council meeting decided to run an Essay Competition at the end of March for the London class students. The subjects for the examination will be; Industrial History, Economics, Imperialism, Economic Geography, Trade Unionism and the Science of Understanding. Book prizes will be given to the best essayists.

The Education Committee of the Royal Arsenal Co-op. Society have now decided to affiliate to the London Council and have paid £5 5s. The two London Co-op. Societies are now connected with us.

The London Council is making arrangements for a series of week-end schools in London during the coming summer, and is also considering the idea of having a week's summer school in Brighton or some other South-Eastern seaside resort. The London organiser will be glad to hear of any London N.C.L.C.ers who would attend this week's school if arranged.

**Div. 2.**—The classes at Aldershot and Guildford are having special lectures by Comrade Knight. The organiser gave a special lecture at Farnborough



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on "Economic Geography and the Workers." This address was arranged by the local A.E.U. branches. Another lecture is to be given on "Labour and Capital in Engineering." Other branches of the A.E.U. can have similar lectures.

The Eastleigh class still leads in the best sales of PLEBS in Div. 2. Comrades Quilley, Lewis and Brine have had a trial as lecturers with very satisfactory results. Comrade Halliday gave some excellent lectures on "Banking and International Finance" to the Cowes class. Littlehampton class reports that Comrade Mathews has delivered some excellent lectures on Industrial History, and has now commenced a new series of Economics. Comrade Wynn Cuthbert had a Week-end School on January 24th.

The Andover class is doing well, and the Andover N.U.R. is giving splendid support. S. G. Singleton has given some intermediate lectures on Feudalism. The Andover Secretary is pushing The PLEBS and hopes to have a record sale of "Education for Emancipation."

*Div. 3.*—Slough, now doing Economic Geography under K. M. Starr, got a good press notice in the local paper in mid-January. Our local affiliation campaign has obtained so far Southend Co-op. Women's Guild and Chelmsford I.L.P. Will Class Secretaries add "Can the Workers achieve Ownership of Capital?" to the list of individual lectures available and *The Inheritors* (Susan Glaspell) and *Night* (Marcel Martinet) to the list of play readings? Southend enjoyed Cedar Paul's reading of the latter and also a visit on 21st February from W. H. Hutchinson. The class here, as at Windsor, is now taking "Trade Unionism," and has secured as chairman for each evening the services of prominent local Trade Unionists. Will College Secretaries please note that the Divisional Conference School could not be fixed for Easter, but will be held at the Labour College, May 8th and 9th? J. F. Horrabin will deal with "Teaching of Economic Geography," and A. M. Robertson will describe "The Work of the Residential Labour College." London comrades are invited, and details will be sent upon request. M. H. Dobb is taking charge of a One Day School at Peterborough on April 11th, and Cedar Paul is giving a play reading. D. Gifford, M. L. Thomas, J. M. Williams, A. Cohen, G. C. T. Giles and Barton Wild are assisting in a series of "Meetings that Matter" at Hitchin. Readings of *Masses and Man* are arranged for Southend (March 7th) and St. Albans (March 14th), and a lantern lecture for Chelmsford (March 25th). Norwich is running a Day School on March 21st, and Comrades Stephenson Lay and Dean are visiting Labour Party ward meetings to explain the Mining Problem.

*Div. 4.*—Hearty thanks to Comrade Higginson for the excellent work he put in as Secretary of the Swansea Labour College. All good wishes to the new Secretary, Comrade Beynon.

Brin Roberts (Labour College Student 1920—22) has secured an appointment as Miners' Agent in the Rhymney Valley. Hearty congratulations! The report of the first winter session shows 54 classes, 1,385 students, 4 day schools, 10 public meetings and 4 educational conferences. College reports reveal possibilities for increasing the number of classes, Trade Union support and

lantern lectures during next session. We want a hundred classes in South Wales this winter, and we are going to get them. What are you doing? The Divisional E.C. has agreed to arrange for the Annual Meeting and Summer School to take place at Penarth, on May 21st to 25th. All College Secretaries are requested to secure immediate bookings as accommodation is limited. The Abergavenny Co-operative Society has arranged an Educational Scheme. Will all local comrades co-operate for the success of this effort?

Swansea L.C. reports the loss of its tutor, W. Bayliss, who has secured an appointment as tutor-organiser in Scotland. Swansea's loss is Scotland's gain.

*Div. 6.*—Dudley College is now running three classes. The Tipton Labour Party, after an address by Stuart Barr, has decided to start a class. Stafford and Stourbridge Colleges have recommenced operations. The Walsall Committee are arranging a Conference and Week-end School for March 20th and 21st; speaker—Organiser Stuart Barr, subject "Industrial Policy." A new class has been formed at Smethwick. Birmingham College has two new affiliations.

*Div. 7.*—The Conference held by Division 7, with A. J. Cook as speaker, has resulted in a substantial financial balance. Special meetings are being arranged for the Textile Workers.

*Div. 8.*—Stockport Co-operative Society has made a grant of £2 2s. Two lantern lectures are to be given in Queensferry Council Schools by J. Hamilton of Liverpool Labour College, one on the "History of the Co-operative Movement" on Friday, March 12th, and the other on "The Evolution of Society" on Friday, March 19th. Liverpool L.C. has arranged a series of five lantern lectures for A.U.B.T.W. apprentices. A class on the Co-operative Movement has been arranged by the Liverpool L.C. for the Northwich Co-operative Society. Tom Lowe, of Warrington, was the speaker at the North Western Educational Section of the Co-operative Union on January 30th.

*Div. 9.*—Congratulations to D. Thompson (West Cumberland College Secretary) and his colleagues on the excellent list of classes.



*Div. 10.—Scotland.*—The opening lecture of the series of lantern lectures arranged by the Edinburgh L. C. was given by John S. Clarke and was highly successful, 450 being present. The meeting was a sixpenny ticket meeting. The Fife, Perth and Dundee Committee has arranged a Conference at Perth to be addressed by Tutor D. J. Williams. Dumfries College, which has only just been formed, has already obtained six local affiliations. Stirlingshire College has formed a class at Plean, 21 students attending. Plean has three rows of houses and is a Unionist stronghold! Ayrshire has appointed W. Bayliss as tutor in place of Comrade Williams, who has taken up an appointment with the Labour Research Department. The Glasgow L.C. has organised a class on "Labour Journalism." This is a new departure. J. Robertson of Musselburgh has once again taken a supply of N.C.L.C. booklets for sale. During the last few years this comrade must have sold thousands of copies of PLEBS and N.C.L.C. booklets. A few more stalwarts of his kind in each area would double our class students in a couple of years.

*Div. 11.—Ireland.*—A magnificent meeting was held in the Town Hall, Newry, with a view to giving the class a good send-off. A. Ellis gave a lantern lecture on I.W.C.E. and Wm. M'Mullen, M.P. gave an instructive review of the economic conditions and possibilities in Ireland. Mr. P. Howley, secretary of the Newry Trades and Labour Council, presided. The six newly elected Labour Councillors took seats on the platform, and two prize bands reminded us that the workers can more than hold their own in any branch of social activity. Many thanks are due to the local comrades who worked unsparingly to make the meeting such a splendid success.

The Newry class promises to be one of Ireland's best, with the above mentioned Councillors as keen students. In Belfast the East Branch of the Electrical Trades Union has affiliated.

*Div. 12.—Nottingham* College continues to be very active. The Secretary has been successful in arranging a class for the Labour Women's Area Committee in Nottingham. Organiser Brown is the lecturer. Classes are also being arranged in connection with

THE  
Labour Monthly

March 1926

NOTES OF THE MONTH

Coalition or Working-class Unity

THE REVOLUTION IN CHINA  
AND EUROPE By Karl Marx

THE INDUSTRIAL ALLIANCE

By W. H. Hutchinson  
(National Labour Party E.C.)

THE COAL CRISIS AND THE WAY  
OUT By A. J. Cook  
(Secretary M.F.G.B.)

WHERE IS BALDWIN GOING?

By "Outpost"

COLOUR VERSUS CLASS IN SOUTH  
AFRICA By M. G. Desdi

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(Acting Secretary T.U.C. General Council)

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three other Women's Labour Party Sections. Classes in the Mansfield Area are having the advantage this session of the services of three new tutors, viz., Bernard Taylor, L. Millar and E. Deaken. Chesterfield College got a push when George Hicks visited the area at the end of January. A good meeting was held in Chesterfield Town Hall on the Sunday evening, at which G. Hicks, C. Brown and Geo. Benson, Labour Candidate for Chesterfield, spoke.

*N.C.L.C. Directory.—Additions and Corrections.*

*Div. 8.*—Rochdale Labour College, Sec.:  
Mr. J. Byrne, 26, Basil  
Street, Rochdale.

*Div. 3.*—Luton Labour College, Sec.:  
J. R. Dransfield, 56, Caven-  
dish Road, Luton.

„ Hitchin Labour College, Sec.:  
L. Barker, 33, King's Road,  
Hitchin.

*Div. 10.*—Ayrshire Tutor: W. Bayliss,  
c/o Harvey, 40, St. Andrews  
Street, Kilmarnock.

„ Perth Secretary: J. Small,  
35, Victoria Street, Perth.

## What PLEBS LEAGUERS are doing

**V**ERY few reports are to hand this month, so that once more the appeal goes forth—Please let us know what you are doing. Even if your report does not find its way into the Magazine, it cheers us up to know that groups are still “carrying on.”

The sale of the Magazine was better last month, and all groups are urged to do whatever is possible to maintain if not actually to increase the sales. Some classes have only the tiniest percentage of members who buy *The PLEBS*, and in such cases League members might arrange a special meeting to discuss the Magazine and explain its object and aim. Perhaps it might be possible to continue a class for an extra night, which might be called a “Plebs” night, and the history of the League and Magazine outlined. Any group arranging such a meeting can have a bundle of the Special PLEBS number, “What are Plebs?” supplied for the mere cost of postage on the parcel. Try it!

Several groups are taking a keen interest in play readings. SHEFFIELD Plebeians are doing a reading of Upton Sinclair’s *Singing Jail Birds* on March 21st. Please note, copies of this play are available again from PLEBS Office, also the 1s. 6d. edition of *Masses and Man*.

MANCHESTER is offering to send out to local working-class organisations a group of comrades who will read plays for propaganda purposes. We hope they’ll be kept busy!

LONDON Plebs members are having a Rally on Friday, March 26th, at which Wm. Paul will sing and a band of strolling players will give “Yaffle’s” play *The Reds Foiled, or the Heart of a Labourer*. Roll up, everybody, and bring your friends. The time is 8 o’clock, and the place St. Bride’s Institute, Fleet Street.

HACKNEY group, although only just started, has managed to sell 18 PLEBS monthly, and is doing well with other Plebs publications. Will any comrade in that area communicate with S. Alexander, 57, Downs Park Road, E. 8.

Will all members take special note : —Our League membership year dates from Jan. to Dec., and subscriptions are now due.

We generally allow two months’ grace to new members, so that if you are a recruit and paid your “bob” in November or December, that will count for the year 1926. But we have no mercy on “old soldiers.” A shilling is not much, and it’s no use remembering that you *once* paid it—our membership file is made up from the counterfoils of the receipts for the current year. (N.B.—“All members” includes members of the E.C. ! There are no special privileges in our movement—except to work a bit harder than other folk !)

W. H.

### A LONDON PLEBS RALLY

**A**LL Plebs in the London area are cordially invited to a Rally and Social Evening to be held on Friday evening, March 26th, at the St. Bride’s Institute (Fleet Street). This is a good central position, and we hope there will be a big muster of I.W.C.E.ers and their friends.

Besides short speeches by Ellen Wilkinson, M.P., George Hicks and other E.C. members, the programme will consist of a performance by the original cast (including “Yaffle” himself) of the now-famous Socialist drama by “Yaffle” of the *New Leader*, which has been twice produced at the Strand Theatre; and, in addition, a recital of Revolutionary Songs by William Paul.

Get your tickets in good time from The PLEBS Office. Prices of admission : Plebs League members, 6d.; non-members, 1s.

### REVOLUTIONARY LITERATURE

**A**S stated last month, Eden and Cedar Paul are anxious to get into touch with any comrades possessing collections of leaflets, pamphlets, manifestoes, &c., issued by “left wing” workers’ organisations during and after the war. Please write E. & C. P., c/o PLEBS Office.

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