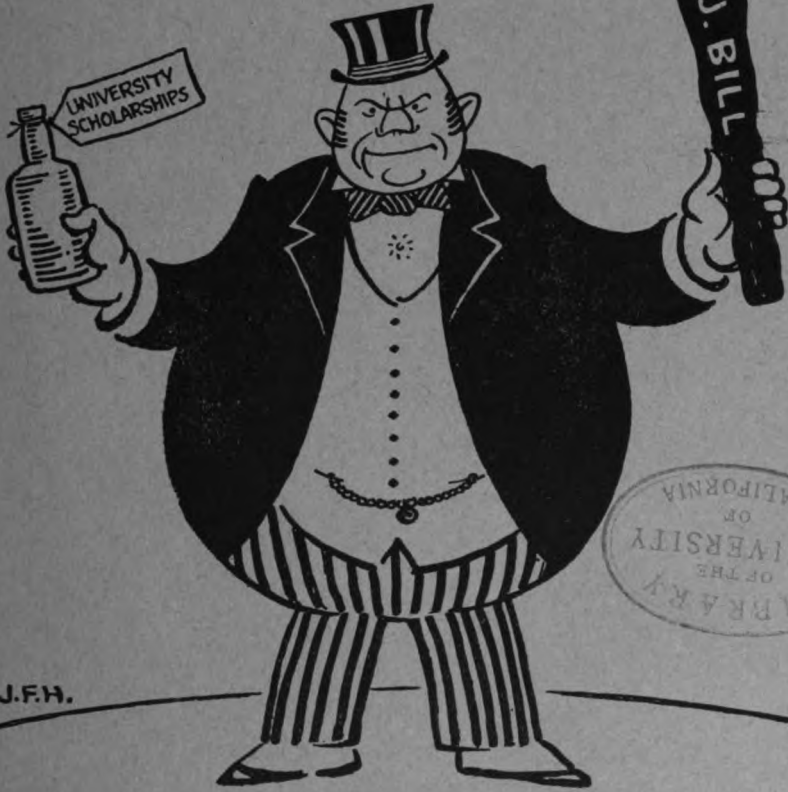


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THE ATTACK ON THE UNIONS

If the workers are to fight effectively against the Tory Government's Bill to smash Trade Unionism, they must know something of the history of their own movement, and of the struggles by which Trade Union rights were won. That is where Independent Working Class Education comes in. And every I.W.C.Er will, at this juncture, do his bit towards spreading among his fellows the knowledge they need.

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THE PLEBS

*The Organ of the National Council
of Labour Colleges*

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The Pleb Point of View



THE Government's Trade Union Bill brings the Labour movement in Britain face to face with a situation the significance of which can scarcely be exaggerated. No student of working-class history can fail to realise that 1927 must henceforth be a milestone of first-rate importance in the long journey of our class towards economic freedom. John Hamilton's article last month was an excellent introduction to a study of the present position. On other pages of this issue of THE PLEBS the Tory proposals are discussed in both their legal and political aspects. What we are anxious to emphasise here is that such a situation places a real responsibility on every I.W.C.Er. It is vitally important that the rank and file of the Labour movement should appreciate the seriousness of the blow which the Boss Class is aiming at them; and one of the most effective ways of arousing a spirit of uncompromising resistance will be to "broadcast" everywhere the story of the struggles of Trade Unionism during the last hundred years. That is work for I.W.C.Ers, and we feel that if all the ordinary activities of our movement were temporarily suspended, and we concentrated, for the next few months if need be, on this single task of teaching and preaching the lessons of working-class history to the widest possible audiences of our fellow-workers, the N.C.L.C. movement would be doing no more than the occasion demands.

* * *

If you were thinking of closing down classes for the summer—reconsider your decision. We have got to take part in the nationwide campaign against this Bill, not merely as *A Crusade!* individuals, but as *an organised movement*. Classes and lectures ought to be arranged with the single, definite objective of countering the lies and misrepresentations of the Boss's Press, and providing a solid foundation of historical knowledge for every class-conscious worker.

And THE PLEBS can help in this. Publications like Mark Starr's *Trade Unionism* and R. W. Postgate's *Short History of the British Workers* ought to be in the hands of every Labour propagandist at the present time. The *History of the Great Strike*, as a record of the very events which led directly to the Boss's determination to attempt to break the weapon of working-class solidarity once and for all, also provides invaluable ammunition for the conflict. Now

is our opportunity, not only to help our fellows with all the energy we can command, but at the same time to demonstrate to them what an important weapon real working-class education is in the struggle against capitalist oppression.

* * *

Working-class education — not scholarships at Oxford and Cambridge. The same class which offers us these at the same time plans a Blackleg's Charter! And yet there are Labour *Dope and Bludgeon* men—Labour leaders, too!—who can hypnotise themselves into believing in the disinterestedness of the Boss when he comes bringing Dope—though all the time he carries the Bludgeon in his other hand. Doubtless the men sent by their Trade Unions to the seats of capitalist culture will be encouraged by the authorities to study the historical and economic reasons why the Unions should resist a Tory Government's attempt to break them down! Doubtless!

Other features of this month's PLEBS will be found of interest as well as value to worker-propagandists at this present time. We are glad indeed to welcome our comrade Max Beer as a contributor to our pages. His description of the discussions on important points between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg is of especial interest in view of events in China to-day. R. W. Postgate's article on the "counter-offensive" by orthodox historians against the findings of the Hammonds and other modern writers in sympathy with the workers' movement affords further evidence of the way in which class interests affect the writing of history.

We ask our friends again to help us by getting new readers for the magazine. If you think THE PLEBS is worth while, tell other comrades about it. We need every ounce of assistance you can give us.

J.F.H.

THE ATTACK

IT has often been said in THE PLEBS that the period when the Labour movement can continue to develop within the framework of democracy upon legal lines has come to an end. The New Year issue sounded the tocsin of "A New Page in the Class Struggle," and pointed out that the General Strike, as the first real mass movement challenging capitalist *power*, had ushered in a new stage in which the class struggle would be rapidly sharpened and would have to be waged by us in an entirely new way. It was stated that we were about to see the appearance of a legal Fascism, operated through the capitalist State, of which the events of 1926 gave the foretaste.

Now with the new Trade Union Bill, more sweeping and vicious

than most had expected, and following closely on the attacks on the miners and on the Chinese workers, we see these statements coming true. The capitalists have a true instinct of what is dangerous to capitalist *power*. They did not mind the Labour Government very much ; they could keep it in "leading strings." But they *did* mind Britain's first mass movement of the workers on a united class front, overflowing sectional barriers and the old conventional boundaries between "political" and "industrial" action. Their response to it is the new Trade Union Bill, which makes any such mass movement in future illegal, and by confining "legal" action to purely *sectional*, industrial action seeks to draw the teeth of trade unionism and to render it "safe." The naked truth is being forced upon us that Fascism, White Terror and repression by all the forces of the State constitute in all countries the inevitable response of capitalism whenever the working class take action on a class scale. Capitalism in its heyday could "buy off" the workers' movement by reforms ; in its declining phase it can only use the bludgeon. Unless in our educational work, therefore, we place the Trade Union Bill against its class background, and show it as part of the *politics of capitalism in decline*, we shall not be treating the situation in a Marxist manner.

And what of the lesson it teaches? In our educational work we cannot neglect that either. Clearly, the answer is that for the new stage we need new methods of struggle ; we need to take up the challenge which capitalism has thrown down by extending the class front and extending the battle beyond the old-style boundaries. This must be done in the localities from the bottom, from the rank and file ; and thereby show the leaders that they must either take up the challenge too, or give way to better men. There must be no question of "striking a bargain" and amending the Bill—as many at the top, who disapprove of "general strikes" as much as Baldwin and preach "industrial peace," are quite eager to do, and to which many Tories will be quite willing to agree. It is not sufficient merely to pass resolutions and make speeches in and out of Parliament, and then to "wait for the next election." It must be a question of answering capitalism's challenge by organising precisely that mass action on a class scale, of which the ruling class has shown itself so much afraid (*e.g.*, by reviving the Councils of Action). To do less would be to abandon arms before the enemy's advance. We did not "take the gloves off" last May—at least they did not at Ecclestone Square. We must make sure that now the movement is fighting for its very existence, it must be "gloves off" this time ! That is the message of May-Day, 1927 !

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

THE scope of this article is merely a legal interpretation of the new Trade Union Bill, but the enormous importance of the Bill to the whole of the Socialist movement must be emphasised at the outset, for it is a very clever piece of drafting. The first section in particular (which reduces to a minimum the right to strike) is so worded as to make recourse to the courts of law necessary to decide the legality of any strike. Those whose memories do not go back as far as the Taff Vale case and the Osborne judgment need only remember the Astbury dictum and the convictions under E. P. A. to realise how little the class-conscious working man has to hope for from the courts.

The Bill contains eight sections, one of which deals merely with interpretation. Each of the remaining sections deals with a working-class activity and makes it an offence against the law. Here are the seven deadly sins so created :—

1ST SIN. ILLEGAL STRIKES. Under the Bill the whole right to strike is in jeopardy. All strikes that comply with *both* the following conditions will be illegal :—

- (a) If it has an object besides the furtherance of a trade dispute within the trade or industry in which the strikers are engaged.
- (b) If it is designed or calculated to coerce the Government, or to intimidate the community or any substantial portion of the community.

First, then, the object of the strike must be considered (as apart from its effect). The T. U. C. and the M. F. G. B. have not yet come to agreement as to the object of the General Strike, and when there is any doubt as to the object of a strike *it will be for the courts to decide*. If the miners came out on strike for nationalisation of the mines, that would be a political object and would offend against paragraph (a). If the transport workers came out to support the miners, this would not be "within the trade or industry" and would likewise offend.

Having decided on the object of the strike, the court would then decide on its effect. Here again it must be emphasised that "calculated," in paragraph (b), means calculated by "twelve persons of the county" or a magistrate (remember E. P. A. !) and not by those who called or took part in the strike. Notice also the phrase, "to intimidate the community or *any substantial portion* of the community." In other words, the strike must not be on a large scale or in a vital industry.

We see then that all strikes for nationalisation will be illegal and so will all sympathetic strikes (except, for example, a strike of the A. S. L. E. & F. in support of the N. U. R. in an industrial dispute

within the industry). We are left only with the simple industrial strike within the industry, and even this is subject to the court's ruling that it is an industrial strike within the industry. Any person who "declares, instigates, furthers, or takes part in" an illegal strike is liable to a fine of £10 or three months' imprisonment on summary conviction and to two years' imprisonment on conviction on indictment. A speech on a platform or an article in PLEBS advocating or encouraging a strike might well be "furthering" within this section. Moreover, the union concerned cannot (if the strike is illegal) claim the immunity given by the Trade Disputes Act 1906 in respect of acts done in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute.

2ND SIN. BLACKLEGS. No person refusing to take part in an illegal strike is to be expelled from the union or in any way penalised, whatever the rules of the union may provide. The court may order any such blackleg to be restored to membership or may order the union to pay damages. *This section is retrospective.*

3RD SIN. PICKETING. Picketing is as good as abolished. "Attending . . . in such manner as to be calculated to intimidate" is illegal, and to intimidate means

"to cause in the mind of a person a reasonable apprehension of injury to him or to any member of his family or of violence or damage to any person or property, and the expression 'injury' includes injury other than physical or material injury, and accordingly the expression 'apprehension of injury' includes an apprehension of boycott, or loss of any kind, or of exposure to hatred, ridicule, or contempt."

Not only has the picket to disguise his contempt for the blackleg, but he has to remove from the blackleg's mind "a reasonable apprehension of exposure to contempt." Another subsection makes it illegal (punishable with a £20 fine or three months' imprisonment) to watch a house for the purpose of inducing any person to abstain from working even without intimidation.

4TH SIN. POLITICAL FUND. Even if a trade union by resolution of the majority of its members has a political fund, no member shall be allowed to contribute to it unless he sends a notice in the form given in the Bill expressing his willingness to contribute. He can withdraw the notice at any time, and the withdrawal will date from the 1st January next. In other words, instead of applying for exemption from participation in a majority decision (as he is at liberty to do at present), the T.U. member will have to give notice to his own officials that he wishes to comply with a rank-and-file decision. The form to be used reminds the member that he can withdraw the notice at any time. The political funds are to be kept separate and full details are to be filed with the Registrar of Friendly Societies *even if the union is unregistered.*

5TH SIN. CIVIL SERVANTS. Civil Servants must only belong to unions whose membership *and affiliated membership* is confined to Civil Servants. The objects of the union must not include political

objects, and it must not be associated directly or indirectly with any political party or organisation.

Crumbs are thrown to two sections of the Civil Service. First, those who have for six months been members of a T.U. which pays benefits can remain members of the union even if it offends against the section. Secondly, Civil Servants who are also engaged in other employment may belong to the union connected with the other employment. Under these apparent concessions one suspects an attempt to split the Civil Service and delay the formation of new unions. Any Civil Servant who contravenes this section shall be dismissed from the Civil Service.

6TH SIN. PUBLIC AUTHORITIES. Public authorities (*e.g.*, Labour Councils and Boards of Guardians) are forbidden to make T.U. membership a condition of employment. Further, if any employee of a public authority wilfully *breaks* his contract of service (*i.e.*, without giving proper notice), having reasonable cause to believe that the probable consequence of his so doing, either alone or in combination with others, will be to hinder the discharge of the authority's functions, he is liable on summary conviction to a fine of £10 or to three months' imprisonment.

7TH SIN. APPLICATION OF T.U. FUNDS. This is not really a fresh sin. It is a fresh stick to beat the sinner with. Not only may an aggrieved member apply for an injunction to restrain the application of T.U. funds in contravention of the Bill, but the Attorney-General can do so without consulting the membership.

SUMMARY.

1. Prohibition of all strikes except industrial strikes within the industry. Courts of law to decide objects and effects of strikes.
2. Protection of blacklegs.
3. Picketing practically abolished.
4. Restrictions on political fund.
5. Civil Servants to have no politics.
6. Employees of public authorities penalised.
7. More power for the Attorney-General. F. G. STONE.

N.C.L.C. SUMMER SCHOOL

KIPLIN, SCORTON, YORKSHIRE.

The Summer School will be held during the fortnight, 2nd to 16th July, 1927, in conjunction with the N.C. Plebs Annual Meetings. Among the lecturers are George Hicks, W. M. Citrine, C. L. Malone, Ellen C. Wilkinson, M.P., J. F. Horrabin, John S. Clarke, A. J. Cook, Wm. Paul, H. S. Redgrove, J. P. Hilton.

The fee is £3 3s. per week or £6 per fortnight. Man and wife £3 per week. N.C.L.C. Tutors and Instructors £3 per week.

SEND your booking fee of 10/- in part payment NOW to J. P. M. Millar, General Secretary, N.C.L.C., 62 Hanover Street, Edinburgh.

CLEAR DECKS!

THE DONS ARE COMING

Health, Wealth and Population, 1760—1815. M. C. Buer. (Routledge, 10/6.)
Population Problems of the Age of Malthus. G. T. Griffith. (Cambridge University Press, 12/6.)

An Economic History of Modern Britain. Vol. I.: The Early Railway Age. J. H. Clapham. (Cambridge University Press, 25/-.)

WITHIN the last ten years modern history has been rewritten, and rewritten to the great benefit of the workers. The appearance of the Hammonds' *Village Labourer*, I think, marks the first big step in the study of modern British history on what are, after all, Marxist lines. The true nature of the Industrial Revolution and the Enclosures, the sufferings of the workers and the method of the foundation of capitalist prosperity are now a great deal better and more widely known than they have ever been before. All this is inconvenient to certain interested parties. In strict logic, no doubt, a correct record of the results of the Enclosures and their effects ought not to move us or affect our actions to-day at all. They are all dead, the actors in that tragedy: the labourer died in a workhouse or slum half a century and more ago, the squire drank and whored himself to death even earlier, and one pile of human bones cannot be told from another. All the same, the account of the origin of the fortunes of our great landed families and captains of industry does provoke emotions of contempt and hatred for their present descendants, and even a feeling that the harsh seizures of hundred years ago could well be reversed now equally harshly—that

Wealth so made

Can be unmade so.

The upgrowth of this school (of which the Hammonds are only the best known among several writers) was likely to lead to two things: *firstly*, a tendency to exaggerate the new discoveries and to blacken the picture unduly; *secondly*, a counter-offensive in force in due course by orthodox historians of a different political bias, with the object of destroying the whole case newly-built up. The books now before me are proof that the second has already begun. Has the first occurred? I am not certain yet; I should like to read a considered reply by the Hammonds before coming to a decision.

The nature of the attack—which is hardly concealed by Miss Buer and Dr. Clapham—is made most clear in an extraordinary frontal attack on Mr. and Mrs. Hammond (and Hutchins and Harrison's book also) in the journal of the London School of Economics (3/1926) written by a Mr. W. H. Hutt. The object is bluntly to prove that, so far from there being an increase of suffering due to the Enclosures

and the Industrial Revolution, the condition of the workers was getting better and better all the time, and the revelations of horrors were due only to the rapidly growing tender-heartedness of the governing class, which declined any longer to allow practices which hardier ages had accepted with indifference. Mr. Hutt proves this case by the simple method of rejecting the evidence put before the Commissions by the reformers and accepting at face value the "smoke screen" put up by employers' representatives. So he quotes without condemnation P. Gaskell's saying that the cotton operative could live "in comparative luxury." Dealing with industrial diseases and child sufferings, he uses the truly remarkable phrase "*malade imaginaire*," and while admitting and deploring the "immorality" of the workers in the new towns, he ascribes it to (1) high wages (!), (2) the large number of Irish. (This seems to be *asking* for trouble.)

Miss Buer and Mr. Griffith link this attack, not wholly logically, with a re-statement of the generally accepted theory of the great increase in population between 1760 and 1830. Their argument is: that the birth-rate cannot have increased in a manner sufficiently meteoric to account for the rise—(this is probably true)—and therefore the increase is due to a terrific decline in the death-rate, owing to the immense sanitary improvements caused by the industrial revolution—(this is very doubtful). Miss Buer admits that the early population figures which she uses were "guesses" and no more, and that Dr. Price, one of the most respected experts, was unfortunate enough to have his figures subjected later to census tests which proved his facts to be utterly and abjectly wrong in almost every possible way. Nevertheless, she continues to use and combine these "guesses" happily, oblivious of the fact that O added to O or multiplied by O is still O. The same criticism applies to Mr. Griffith's highly technical and tedious book, which (I am afraid) apart from the section on Ireland is consequently nearly useless.

One's confidence in Miss Buer is sadly shaken when it is found that she totally ignores one of the most important collections of facts in her favour—Place's volumes of cuttings in the British Museum, several of which are especially devoted to proving her thesis of the advancement of the workers. Indeed, she (like Mr. Griffith) despises anything that is not officially and solemnly labelled an investigation of her problem. She does not, for example, seem to have realised that Cobbett, in an irregular and unscholastic manner which would not have secured him a B.Sc., dealt very trenchantly with the population question. *He* argued, and proved by personal investigation in several regions, that there had been no such huge increase at all; there had been merely a *shifting* of population. All through the later 18th and early 19th century, he argued, there had been a progressive *depopulation* of the country districts, which, together with natural increase and Irish immigration, sufficiently

explained the "phenomenal increase" which townsmen thought they saw. The country workers were driven in herds into the towns : that was all.

Nor even in sanitary matters do either Miss Buer or even Dr. Clapham seem to appreciate fully the true problem. All the sanitary improvements they record no doubt occurred—Paving Acts, lying-in hospitals, drainage, and medical discoveries of the most important kind.* But an open cesspool and a dung heap in the street, which are quite tolerable in an overgrown village, are deadly in Leeds or Manchester. The mere growth of the towns, the accumulation of people and houses, turned numerous mediæval habits from quaint barbarities into loathsome causes of infection. Fifty insanitary cottages on a hillside may be an almost harmless and picturesque rural settlement : five thousand are an industrial hell-hole. By *beginning* to control the latter the new century might *begin* to get somewhere near the effective level of the old days. No more.

Dr. Clapham's book is by no means merely a rehabilitation by special pleading of the early capitalists. It is an enormously valuable sourcebook, to the making of which has gone great learning, wide reading and enormous patience. I would not call it a *history*. It is an exhaustive economic *survey* of England, Wales and Scotland at two different epochs. It lacks, consequently, continuity and a general scheme : and the mere mass of the facts accumulated make it in places very hard reading. Nevertheless, it will remain for years a standard work ceaselessly consulted by students.

The explosion of "the legend" of working-class suffering through the Industrial Revolution, however, he announces as being one of the main reasons for his work (p. vii.). But only at the very end does he approach this question. And then one reads this chapter with a growing surprise. The housing conditions he admits were fully as bad as pictured, the sanitary conditions also. The misery of the handworkers he does not deny, except by claiming certain exceptions (giving no figures—an unusual omission). The lowered cost of living he agrees only operates "after 1848," and points out that cost of living figures, being based on wholesale prices, are by no means necessarily a true index to the retail prices which the workers had to pay. (Retail prices may for a long period in many areas be much higher : they will never for long be much lower.) Dealing with truck, he "inclines" to an extremely low figure—apparently that it was "abused" over "5 per cent. of the industrial field," while admitting that there is no proof possible. In dealing with the immensely important New Poor Law of 1834, he fails even

* Miss Buer's chapters on these constitute the really valuable section of her book. She really warms to enthusiasm on the subjects of Leprosy, Rickets, Scurvy, Plague, Malaria, Smallpox, and Mr. John Bramah, who invented water closets and the public-house "pullover" beer tap.

to summarise its provisions, which in themselves are pretty damning.

In fact, the effective portion of the onslaught dwindles down to a few pages which argue that factory wages and the wages of skilled craftsmen whose trade was unaffected by machinery grew steadily better. On top of this, one is more than astonished to find that at the kernel of the argument concerning wages the most essential figures are collected from A. L. Bowley's *Wages in the United Kingdom*. Professor Bowley is best known in the cold, hard world as the gentleman who was put up at the Inquiry held after the war to prove that dockers' wages were already too high: the book of his that Dr. Clapham quotes was published in 1900. The heralded refutation, in great part, turns out to be a rehash of a twenty-seven-year-old manipulation of figures by a prejudiced professor! No doubt Richard Pilling, the factory operatives' leader, was suffering from delusions (due to over-feeding) when he broke down the complacency of the Government lawyers in 1842 by his detailed account in Court of wage reduction after reduction in the Lancashire cotton area. No doubt the masters of Hyde, Ashton, Stalybridge, Bolton, Wigan, Warrington, Preston and Blackburn, when they cut wages year after year to meet the cuts in competing areas, never did so in fact, but only pretended, in order to vex Mr. Bowley. No doubt unemployment, fines and short time existed only in the pages of Chartist pamphlets. No doubt the Chartists themselves, who paralysed part of England by their general strike of 1842, did so only from reckless *joie de vivre* due to their continually increasing consumption of luxuries. "Really, my lords" (to quote Lord Brougham), "I feel this is great nonsense."

Even in dealing with the wages of skilled craftsmen whose trades were unaffected by machinery—a more hopeful field—Dr. Clapham's standard of scholarship seems less exacting than elsewhere in this book. I can only give two examples. He treats Mr. and Mrs. Hammond with marked disdain, but he gives considerable attention (flattering and the reverse) to my own *Builders' History*. In an appendix to this book I quoted (over his name) another writer's estimate of operative builders' wages, at certain arbitrary and insufficiently numerous dates. I did not express an open opinion of this estimate, but what I thought of it could be judged from the fact that I made no use whatever of the earlier figures in the text. Dr. Clapham sweetly assumes that this was because I was incapable of the effort required for the correlation, and proceeds to father the wage table on to *me*. So that "according to Postgate" builders' wages rose "by 66.6" per cent. between 1780-90 and 1826-47! This is not history, it is sleight of hand. "According to Postgate" my foot: I entirely repudiate such a crazy figure.

Again, I note that he quotes the figures given in "builders' price books". These were booklets which were shown to "Gentlemen

desiring an Erection'' by the master builders—but Dr. Clapham does not inquire how often the operative actually *got* the rates mentioned, or for how long he was unemployed, etc., etc. Indeed, in this whole section, unlike his usual practise, Dr. Clapham does not inquire at all.

* * * *

The Dons' attack has opened not too well. Mr. Griffith, water-logged, sank before coming into action : Miss Buer advances noisily and splashily, but her metal is very light : Dr. Clapham's guns roar very loud, but I suspect the shells are duds.

RAYMOND W. PCSTGATE.

SOVIET FICTION ¹

1924 was almost as momentous a year in the development of Soviet fiction as it was in the economic and political spheres. It was the year in which Seifullina's *Virinea* and Babel's *Cavalry Army* were published, and in many ways it marked a definite turning-point in the development of fiction. But, above all, 1924 was noteworthy for the publication of Fyedin's *Towns and Years*.

Constantin Fyedin had begun writing immediately after the war, and had attracted attention by such shorter stories as *The Orchard*, in which his later development finds its early indication. But he had not caused any great stir, and *Towns and Years* came as a distinctly fresh contribution to the development of the Soviet novel. Indeed, if we exclude such stories as Pilnyak's *Naked Year*, and others which are novels only in length, then *Towns and Years* was really the first Soviet novel to be written.

Nor is its distinction confined to this, or to the peculiar form which Fyedin chose to take as his medium. Such mechanical devices as placing the last chapter at the beginning and other displacements of time sequence, as well as minor inversions of plot development, may be disregarded by us as being merely an attempt to obtain striking effects. It is the content, and not the form, of *Towns and Years* which is of interest.

The story is in the main a psychological study of four principal characters, and their interplay of personality, seen against the background of war and revolution in Russia and Germany. Andrei Starkov may be taken as personifying the pre-war intellectuals with his Chekhovian irresolution, his continual vacillation and his inability to subdue his impulsive emotional reactions to any informed will and purpose. In strict contrast to him is Kurt Van, a German artist and Communist, whose every action and thought is dominated by

¹ Since March Veressaev's *cul-de-sac* has been published by Faber and Gwyer with the title of *The Deadlock* (7/6).

the cause and ideals to which he has devoted his life, whose character knows no vacillations or hesitations even when it is a case of delivering his friend Andrei to revolutionary justice for his mistaken and sentiment-inspired betrayal of the Communist cause. But the real protagonists of the story are not Andrei and Kurt—Andrei is merely a foil for the third character, Markgraf Schroenau, who is the incarnation of the most malignant as also the most intelligent and purposeful element of the old order. It is between Kurt and the Markgraf that the real struggle takes place, and Andrei's position is that of the man between the upper and nether millstones. The same is true of the heroine, Mary Ulrich, who embodies the emotional protest of modern youth against the domination of the old and all its horrors, yet who fails to see any straight and narrow way to its overthrow.

The story ends (in the first chapter!) with the elimination of Andrei, and the temporary defeat of the Markgraf and his withdrawal to Germany. But while the revolutionary forces thus triumph, Fyedin leaves the ultimate issue in doubt, while making it clear that the elimination of the purposeless and uncertain elements of the old order merely leaves the stage free for the renewal of the far greater struggle between the old purposes and the new.

Apart from its content, *Towns and Years* is noteworthy as a masterly study in modern psychology, and by taking a psychological line of approach to his characters Fyedin has in a sense returned to the manner of the classic Russian novel. But it has to be emphasised that it is not strictly a return, rather is it an advance; for his psychological treatment is not comparable with the intensely subjective psychological analysis which characterises the old writers. It is a more scientifically objective analysis, a dissociation of the author from his characters, and this enables him to avoid the futilities of the old introspection and to carry the story on to a definite conclusion and achievement.

Lenov's *Badgers*, certainly the outstanding novel of 1925, takes a very different conflict for its theme: the conflict of town and country. Dealing in particular with the life of two young peasant lads, Simeon and Pavel, who come to Moscow and work there until the outbreak of war, its general theme is the innate antagonisms between the village and the town, especially as accentuated and intensified during the period of civil war and grain requisitions. Partly perhaps by reason of temperament, Leonov paints the struggle in sombre colours (there is the very smell of decay in his picture of Moscow back-street life in pre-war days) and with the aid of a remarkably pictorial style, by means of which nature itself is made to play an almost living part in the story, he brings home all the blind misery and inarticulate despair of the

village when confronted by the mysterious and unknown, instinctively dreaded forces of the town. The peasant mind is revealed with remarkable and sympathetic insight, and almost one feels that Leonov is at heart on the side of the village. But for him also the immediate, and even the ultimate result of the conflict is indubitable, the fate of the village is inexorable, and the band of peasant guerillas with Simeon at their head, which has waged a desperate war with the local Communist elements, is dispersed and reduced to submission by a force sent down from Moscow, among which is the other brother, Pavel. Yet it is not so much the armed forces of the town which break up the band and overcome the peasantry ; it is the very logic of events, the iron necessity of history working itself out, as Pavel tells Simeon in a strange lonely meeting in the forest. "You'll come over to us all the same, and not merely because we're defending your land. No, without us there's no road the village can take, you'll see." And Simeon is constrained to admit that it is so, and goes out alone to submit to the new and the inevitable. In some respects, and especially judged from the purely literary point of view, Leonov's *Badgers* is the greatest work of art yet produced by a Soviet novelist.

Fyedor Gladkov's *Cement*, published in 1926, is also a novel of conflict, the third great struggle that the workers of Soviet Russia are waging. While the earlier part of the story deals with the civil war and the struggle to maintain the conquests of the revolution, it is chiefly concerned with the reconstruction period, and portrays the return to life and activity of a little town and its cement works. Chief parts in the work of reconstruction, as in the task of repulsing the white forces, are played by a young worker soldier, Gleb Chumalov, and his wife Dasha, and through these two and other characters Gladkov reveals the revolutionary fervour and determination which overthrew the old order and kept it at bay, being flung wholeheartedly into the restoration of economic life. He reveals, what neither Fyedin nor Leonov reveal, the ability of the workers not only to pull down and destroy, but to build up and create ; he reveals the last great conflict that faces the workers, the conflict with nature and life itself, the final struggle with the slavery of economic conditions, and their gradual subjugation to the corporate will of man. And because this is so, because Gladkov enters profoundly and sympathetically into the creative spirit of the workers, because he discerns a synthetic process at work in the revolution, and has the eye to see not only the overthrow of the old order but the birth of the new, *Cement* is a great achievement, greater than either *Towns and Years* or *The Badgers*, even though from the formal literary aspect it ranks not so high. Gladkov, who works at the office of the Soviet Trade Union General Council in

Moscow, has written the finest interpretation of Soviet Russia's creative efforts yet given to the world.

One need hardly say that Soviet fiction is still in a stage of formation and development. The past years have been years of experimentation, with new forms and with new content, and this has left its impress of chaos and great disunity on the literature, its one common characteristic being realism. Yet even in its realism there has been development, and whereas the realism of the early days was severely uncompromising and analytical, leaving nothing whatever to the imagination, already this has largely yielded to more imaginative treatment, which, itself more synthetic, calls the reader's own imaginative faculties into requisition, and gains its effect by suggestion as well as by plain, downright matter-of-factness. The writers are clearly no longer merely setting up their memories in type, but are becoming more creative.

Modern Soviet fiction has completely broken with the past, and its realism is only a reflection of the writers' (and workers') attitude to life. They are intensely concerned with events, and comparatively little with subjective mental reactions to them. For them man is master of the event, and not event the master of man, as it was in the old writers. The ominous, brooding fatalism of Chekhov and Dostoyevski is dethroned; the enslaved wills have been unshackled; the characters are not continually talking about going to Moscow to-morrow or next month; they pack up their things and set out without more ado. Conflict—man's conflict with man, with nature, with life itself—is the dominant note not only of the three typical novels above mentioned, but in every serious story of any importance during the last ten years: not excluding even those of Ehrenburg!

Conflict, and man's dynamic will, set free by the revolution and grappling with the fatalism and inertia inherent in the old order, in things, in the mechanics of life itself, the intense self-confidence and the creative ability of the worker once he has taken his destiny into his own hands, his overthrow of the walls and gates of his social and economic prison, his exploration of new realms of social relationships and his setting out on the journey to the land of his dreams and desires—these are the themes and fundamental conceptions in Soviet fiction. Like the country itself, it is still in a transition stage, still passing out of the shadow of the old into the greater hope and freedom of the new. It is early yet to prophecy what paths it will take in the future or what its ultimate achievement will be, but one thing is certain beyond all doubt: it will never return to the old attitude to art or to life. And judging by what it has already done, it gives the promise of an achievement in the future still greater than that of classic Russian fiction.

H. C. STEVENS.

THE LENIN-LUXEMBURG CONTROVERSY

Max Beer, the well-known Socialist historian, gives us here the first of two articles describing the discussions which took place between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg before the war. The issues of the discussion have now become of wide international interest. Hitherto, however, scarcely anything has been known of the discussion in this country at all. The writing of this article has required special research into files of German Socialist papers, and the result is the publication of material which is completely new to our movement, and which, incidentally, has no little topical interest.

THESE lines are not dictated by the desire to make converts either for Lenin or Luxemburg, nor to induce the converted to give preference to the views of one over the other, but to assist the student in his endeavour intelligently to follow the discussion which is still going on between the respective adherents of those two outstanding figures of Marxist thought and revolutionary action.

1. Lenin and Luxemburg were both gifted by nature with intellectual and moral energies far above the average. Lenin's mind, as it appears from his writings and activities, was much more powerful, but not so nimble and many-sided as that of Luxemburg. He was absolutely single-minded: his thinking and doing were exclusively bent on the furtherance and realisation of the social revolution in Russia, on the conquest of power by the working class in alliance with the peasantry, as the lever of the universal revolution of the working classes and oppressed nationalities. One cannot imagine Lenin putting away, for months and months, his economic studies, revolutionary propaganda and organising activities for the study of botany, astronomy, or painting, as Luxemburg could do, and actually did. Lenin knew Russia from top to bottom, and other countries quite well. Luxemburg knew all countries quite well, but none was her own domain of revolution. Lenin visualised the social revolution in Russia as something very near and concrete and which was to be prepared for by concrete means, just as a clear-thinking Foreign Office and War Office visualise a war and prepare for it. Luxemburg thought of social revolution in general; she regarded it as an inevitable terminating phase of capitalist development which was to be investigated and for which the working class had to be educated, so as to enable it to take advantage of that supreme moment, whenever it might arrive. Lenin was the statesman and the organiser of the Russian

social revolution, and the inspirer of the universal revolution; Luxemburg a keen student and ardent propagandist of the revolutionary Labour Movement in general.

2. The first clash between Lenin and Luxemburg occurred in 1903-4; it was the time when the Social Democratic Movement in Russia, emerging from the stage of loose organisation, of small autonomous circles and conspiratory societies, was on the point of forming a political Party. The question uppermost in the mind of the leaders was the drafting of Rules which were to embody the new organising idea and policy (tactics) of the Party. Two currents of thought were struggling for supremacy:

(a) The Menshevik one, which was, on the whole, in conformity with the more advanced wing of Central and Western European Social Democracy, i.e., organisation of the labouring masses, their education to an understanding of Socialism, conquest of power by the working class, establishment of a social and democratic Commonwealth. All workers carrying on the economic class war (forming trade unions and, in case of necessity, downing tools) and all persons who adopt Socialist views and support the Party were to be regarded as members.

(b) The other current was the Bolshevik one, represented mainly by Lenin, who looked upon the Social Democratic Party as an organisation of the most capable and most devoted, in short, the *élite* of the Socialist and Labour Movement, and its Central Committee or Executive as the General Staff, determining the strategy and tactics of the whole revolutionary working class. Not any working man who was a trade unionist and in the interest of his organisation struck work, nor any person who sympathised with, or gave material and literary support to the Socialist Movement, was *ipso facto* a member of the Party. With Lenin, membership of the Party was conditioned by personal activity in the cause, by personal endeavour and qualification to win the confidence of workers and the leadership of their various organisations. A Socialist Party was not mainly a society for debating social problems nor a machinery to procure parliamentary seats for its members, but an organisation for the purpose of winning the working class and leading it into the battle for its economic emancipation. The real arena of the members of the Social Democratic Party was formed by field, mine, factory, and proletarian organisations.

The opposition to Lenin came from two sides: from the old representatives of the autonomous conspiratory circles and secret societies, who in the name of liberty protested against the centralising aspirations of the Bolshevik leader; then from the Social Democrats, who saw in Lenin's idea of Party a sort of revival of the Jacobin-Blanquist type of organisation, a small, but highly efficient

society, but separated from the masses and trying to dominate them by means of usurped dictatorial power.

Luxemburg belonged to the latter category of critics of Lenin, and wrote two articles in the Russian *Iskra*, which were translated into German and published in the *Neue Zeit*, 1904 (vol. 2, p. 488 sqq., p. 521 sqq.). She told him that the Social Democratic Party was nothing else but the political organisation of the working class and that the policy of the Party could not be determined by the Central Committee, but arose out of the spontaneous activities of the proletariat, fighting for its vital interests. She wrote literally: "Also with regard to the fighting policy, the unconscious precedes the conscious; the logic of the objective process of history comes before the subjective logic. The rôle of the Social Democratic leadership is essentially of a conservative character," it guarded the terrain won by the working class and worked it out in all its consequences and turned it into a bulwark from which further progress would be made possible. Important for social democracy was not the intuitive and anticipatory construction of the future policy, but the proper appreciation of the fighting policy prevailing at a given point of the development of the Labour Movement. Luxemburg looked upon the class struggle between Capital and Labour as a historic process, the laws of which were translated by the Social Democrats into theoretical and tactical views; the best guarantee for their correct translation was the unfettered development of the Labour Movement and the Social Democratic Party; but, since those theoretical and tactical views were manifestations of, and adjustments to the given phase of economic development, opportunist mistakes were inevitable, but would be corrected by Social Democracy never losing sight of the ultimate aims of the Labour Movement. Lenin's over-centralisation desired to guard the movement against all opportunism, but at the same time it stifled the creative power of the movement, and deprived it of its elasticity, of which the Party stood in great need, for the approaching Revolution in Russia would be a *bourgeois* revolution, during which the Labour Movement would be exposed to the danger of being enmeshed in middle class thought and switched off its Socialist road.

In the years from 1905 onwards, i.e., between the first and second Russian Revolution (1905-1917), Luxemburg approached more and more the position of Lenin, but never identified herself with Lenin. Her most advanced position found expression in the manifesto, written by her as leader of the Spartakus-Bund (1918) a month before she suffered martyrdom.

3. The second point at issue between Luxemburg and Lenin was *Nationality*. Luxemburg was strongly of opinion that in the Imperialist period of history there was no room for nationalist

struggles ; she regarded all nationalist struggles as an anachronism ; she believed all the talk about self-determination of the nations was rather retrogressive, and that it was particularly dangerous for the proletarian revolution to get involved in nationalist conflicts.

Lenin opposed her, being convinced that the struggle for national emancipation, particularly in Asia, would play an important rôle in the universal social revolution. Reviewing a pamphlet written by Luxemburg in 1916 and published in 1916 under the pseudonym of "Junius" (*Krise der Sozialdemokratie*), Lenin declared : "Nationalist wars against Imperialism are not only possible and probable, but inevitable, and must be regarded as progressive and revolutionary. For instance, a national war of liberation by Persia, India, and China is quite probable, and will be of great assistance to a proletarian revolution in any of the great countries of Europe. Under a Socialist régime the right of nationalities to self-determination must be recognised." (Written by Lenin in the autumn, 1916).

M. BEER.

CAPITALISM AND EDUCATION

THE most important question that confronts the Labour Movement is, in my opinion, the question of education. If it be true—as it undoubtedly is—that the majority of the evils which afflict society to-day are the product of the capitalist system of society, and would cease to exist with the passing of that system, it is equally true that Capitalism persists only because of the ignorance of the masses of the workers, who hold in their hands the means to destroy it, or, as I would prefer to phrase it, to resolve the antinomy of the class struggle into the higher unity of the Socialist Commonwealth.

A good deal of the propaganda engaged in by the various sections of our movement is not propaganda in the real sense of the word at all, but is a genuine effort to instruct adult minds in some of the elementary facts and principles of economics and sociology. In a more obvious manner the National Council of Labour Colleges is engaged in the same task. I take the difference between education and propaganda to be that, whilst the educator endeavours to lead minds to the observation and discovery of facts and to the drawing of valid conclusions therefrom, the propagandist's aim is to influence minds to accept opinions by any means at his disposal. The distinction is a real one ; but it is not hard and fast, for the world of experience does not permit of hard and fast distinctions being drawn. It may be asked, for example, whether it is not certain that some-

thing of the educator's personality—his views and opinions—must, even if he be most experienced in impartiality, be transmitted to the minds he educates. On the other hand, whilst propaganda may descend to mere vote-catching in the realm of politics, or to the hypnotic artifice of the mass suggestion that compels us (if we do not resist its effects) to buy so-and-so's cocoa and so-and-so's pills, because so-and-so's name is shouted at us from every hoarding and newspaper, it may, as I have already pointed out, contain a large proportion of strictly educative material.

The educative side of the work of the Labour movement is, to my mind, of paramount importance, and, indeed, I like to envisage the movement as essentially an educative one. If it is true, as I am convinced, that an impartial examination of the facts of history and of the structure of present-day society clearly demonstrates the existence of the class struggle, it would seem that the mere presentation of these facts to the mind of the worker should result in his immediate adherence to Socialism. Actually, however, a resistance to the inevitable conclusion is too frequently met with, a resistance arising, in some cases, from a contrary opinion based upon partial and inaccurate information, in some cases from sheer prejudice.

What, let us ask, is the source of this resistance? And let us, in the first place, approach the solution to this question *a priori*. Capitalist governments can only hope to remain in power in a democratic country in virtue of the ignorance of the workers. Is it not obvious, therefore, that in the schools controlled by such Governments every effort possible will be made to achieve this end? An examination of the education of the young worker in the State-controlled schools is indicated as providing a solution to the question of why democracy has failed.

We have, when we come to examine the facts, the classic instance of imperialist Russia, which kept its people in the darkest ignorance; an enquiry undertaken in 1920 revealing the terrible fact that six out of every ten Russians over the age of eight were illiterate. In this country free elementary education was most grudgingly granted to the workers; and the present Government's attitude towards education in this country, as that of its predecessors (with the single exception of the short-lived Labour Government), can be summed up in the one word "Economy."

It is not, however, merely the question of the *quantity* of education provided by the State schools with which we are concerned. We have also to consider the question of its *quality*. Here, also, the cloven hoof of capitalism is only too clearly manifest. The free education to be given in the elementary schools was originally defined as that "suited to the conditions of workmen and servants," *i.e.*, its object was to produce docile wage slaves, and the influence of the old prescription has by no means passed away. The Teachers'

Labour League has been criticised for advocating political propaganda in the schools. This it has never done. What it has done is to call attention to the political propaganda already existent in the schools. For this it has, very naturally, incurred the high displeasure of Lord Eustace Percy. I say "only naturally," for Lord Percy is sagacious enough to know that, were it not for the continual poisoning of the minds of the workers' children in the State schools, the capitalist system would inevitably come to an end. The propaganda is particularly carried on by means of history books which deal only with the doings of kings and their governments, and ignore the life of common people, dismissing the aspirations of the workers with contempt, by the utilisation of Empire Day and similar occasions to inoculate the minds of the workers' children with the poisonous germs of Tory imperialism, as well as in other ways.

Against this gross misuse of the State schools, which is an inevitable phenomenon of capitalism, the Labour Party at the instance of the Teachers' Labour League unanimously passed, at its last Annual Conference, a strong resolution of protest, and called upon Labour members of educational authorities and Labour school managers to take steps to prevent its continuance.

The question of the education of the worker's child is a question of vital importance to the whole Labour movement. On the right solution of the many problems involved, the future welfare of the world may well depend. The League is engaged in the task of studying these problems. In particular, its last Annual Conference instructed it to investigate the whole problem of "class bias" in education. The bitter attacks which have been made on the League in the capitalist Press undoubtedly spring from fear as to what the report of this investigation may reveal as to the anti-working-class bias of the education meted out to the children of the workers in so many schools to-day.

We are confronted by the tragedy of ignorance. Our task is the creation of an educated democracy. It is the task of the whole Labour movement, a task in the achievement of which the Teachers' Labour League, on the one hand, and the National Council of Labour Colleges, on the other hand, have special parts to play. Forward, comrades!

H. STANLEY REDGROVE, B.Sc.

(President of the Teachers' Labour League).

WE DON'T CHARGE YOU INTEREST—

**BUT OUR BANKERS CHARGE US, WHEN
WE ARE ON OVERDRAFT BECAUSE**

YOU HAVEN'T PAID YOUR BILL !

HAVE You Paid Your Bill to the Office ?

RESEARCH AND

CLASS-WORK

THE worker-student who has read the half-dozen or so articles which have appeared in PLEBS will have gathered a good general idea of the methods employed in research work. R. W. Postgate has dealt ably with the historical subjects, while Glyn Evans has pointed the way to discover facts relative to local "nabobs." For the actual recording of notes the method of the Webbs appears to be the best, but the use of a loose-leaf notebook seems an improvement on their method. Loose sheets have an unhappy knack of getting lost just when they are wanted. At least, that is my experience.

To what has been said in previous articles I would add that each research worker should try to be original in material, try to make people who lived in the incidents of the particular period speak for themselves, quote their sayings from the newspapers of the time, cull from their minute-books, and make liberal use of their records, rules, speeches, etc., where they exist. Their own words have a more authentic sound than the students' opinions.

Working-class research work has a definite utility. It is not a hobby, but a definite phase of the class struggle. This struggle takes place on many fronts, and our research work has to be as varied as these fronts. On each of these battle-fronts, in each locality and in each industry, an ever-increasing supply of munitions is required. The research worker who sets out to supply this need is a munition provider. The N.C.L.C., THE PLEBS, the L.R.D., etc., are the arsenals of our movement. They provide the raw material for the intensification of the fight. We must be conscious of this connection. The organised fighting working-class must have an organised supply of mental munitions, and only the workers themselves can supply a constant stream of reliable munitions. (The bourgeois research worker provides us with dud shells; only by accident does he supply a live shell to fire against his own class.)

The L.R.D., etc., however, can only supply, in the nature of things, information of general interest. Most of the research work done in our movement has taken too broad a field to add a topical interest to our ordinary class work. And the actual struggle takes place in the lodge rooms, the branches, the pits and the workshops. It is not enough that we should be able to trace the historical struggle in the textile industry; we should be able to follow it in our own industry, in our own locality, and even in our own workshop or pit. It is the local fights which make up the general class struggle, and

research work dealing with the localities is as important, if not more important, than general research work.

This series of articles will have caused a number of students to turn to research work. But it is not much use for a few workers to poke about among the files of musty newspapers unless the facts they obtain are available in the fight. It would be like gold at the bottom of the sea instead of in PLEBS office.

To organise and stimulate this phase of our work the local colleges should organise competitions among the class students under their control. Prizes, such as scholarships at week-end and summer schools could be awarded the best efforts. Subjects set for such competitions should be essentially local, so that the general principles of our teaching could be applied to local detail and conditions. As a guide the following are suggested :—

- Local history of miners.
- Local history of ironworkers.
- Local history of transportation.
- Local Trade Union struggles.
- Enclosures of commons in the locality.
- History of the Trades Council, etc.

This list could be altered in accord with the needs and character of the district.

If each division of the N.C.L.C. would offer a scholarship at a summer school for the best piece of research work done in its area, much would be done to put the work on a permanent basis. The National Council itself could add its blessing by earmaking for the next five years a sum of money to be devoted to a scholarship at its annual training centre for the student who produces the best piece of research work each year. The value of the mass of local colour resulting from such research efforts is obvious for the teaching of history. The local value of the N.C.L.C. would be increased a hundred times ; it would take its place more definitely in local struggles.

Each N.C.L.C. division has a local weekly labour paper running within its borders, and these papers would only be too glad to publish the results of local research work. In this way, in addition to lectures by the research student, the work would be made available in the general struggle. No doubt, PLEBS would also arrange to publish in its pages many of these efforts. The ultimate publication in pamphlet form would be a matter for the divisional councils of the N.C.L.C. In this way the N.C.L.C. and PLEBS would function more definitely as the munition works of the workers' struggle.

What have Plebs and the N.C.L.C. to say about it?

NESS EDWARDS.

Reviews of Books

"THE THEATRE OF THIS EMPIRE"

The Anatomy of African Misery. By Lord Olivier (Hogarth Press, 6/-).
Modern India. By V. H. Rutherford (Labour Publishing Co., 7/6).
China in Revolt. By T'ang Leang-Li (Noel Douglas, 7/6).

AN atlas of Great Britain published in the year of our Lord 1611 bore the interesting title "The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britain." That theatre has extended its sphere of operations—gone on a world tour, so to speak—during the intervening centuries. These three books all have interesting things to say about its activities in various parts of the earth at the present day.

They make it very clear that its main business, now as always, is the bringing of the blessings of European civilisation to the inhabitants of more benighted continents. This is done by stealing their land (as, where this is impracticable, exacting such privileges as "extra-territoriality" and "concessions") and then permitting the so-created native proletariat to work for wages which leave over a high margin of surplus value for the civilisers. Lord Olivier tells how, in the Union of South Africa, a million and a half Europeans hold 280 million acres of land; while four and a half million natives occupy some 20 million acres. This distribution is doubtless sufficient of itself to convince the Africans of the advantages of being civilised, more especially as much of the land left to them is "of poor quality and without water, malarial, or in other respects unfit for human habitation."

Elsewhere, too, the civilisers have evidently realised the desirability of living lives which are a Noble Example to inferior races. Mr. Rutherford, for example, describing the New Delhi, tells us how

the British reside beyond the city walls in detached villas, fitted with every modern convenience to make life comfortable and disease rare, lighted by electricity, with pretty rose gardens and lawn neatly clipped. . . with well-made and well-kept roads, and magnificent parks. . .

He also says—

With my own eyes I have seen the peasants in every [Indian] village that I have inspected living in overcrowded hovels, which would be more accurately described as kennels, in surroundings of dirt, discomfort and squalor indicative of the palæolithic period.

Mr. T'ang, as befits a member of an inferior race, has been studying the writings of the civilisers, doubtless in order to convince himself of that beneficence upon which the actual state of affairs in China to-day would seem to throw some doubt. From a book by a Christian missionary (British!) he quotes this:—

To England belongs the supreme honour of breaking down the isolation of China. The nation for many long ages has waited, unconscious of its needs (1) for a deliverer. . . England's armies came and English guns were heard. . . How little did those men dream. . . that behind the tumult and mad rush of the battle there were deeper forces at work that were going to bring a mighty deliverance to the people of this great Empire? But, in God's providence, it was Englishmen who were selected by Him. . . to open her gates and to let in the larger and more beneficent thoughts that the Gospel had given to the peoples of the West.

Quite! Wages of adult workers in the (foreign) municipal area of Shanghai from 16s. to 30s. per month: women from 2½d. to 6d. per day (T'ang, p. 113.) Wages in the Bombay cotton mills "average out at less than 2s. a day of eleven hours for men, 1s. a day for women, and from 4d. to 6d. for children. . . Gross profits of the mills in 1920-1 amounted to £16,000,000 sterling, the dividends of thirty-five leading mills averaging 59 per cent." (Rutherford, pp. 95, 96.) Wages in the S. African mines, which set the standard for all industry throughout S. Africa:—"The

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cash wage that may be paid to a Kaffir is 2s. 2 4/5ths per shift." (Olivier, p. 32).

Up the Gospel!

J. F. H.

ECONOMICS.

OF books on economic subjects published since the New Year, there are few of any value for the general reader, but several of importance for research workers and tutors specialising on specific subjects.

Monetary Reconstruction, by R. G. Hawtrey (Longmans, 10/6) has appeared in a Second Edition, to which chapters have been added on the results of the Genoa Conference, the Dawes Scheme and the Return to Gold, bringing it right up to date. The author is Secretary to the Treasury, and sets forth a large amount of very valuable facts and figures about the monetary events in Europe since the war, bringing to bear upon these facts a very careful analysis of cause and effect. It constitutes the best reference book so far available for those dealing with current monetary topics. Needless to say, it deals with the money and credit mechanism in a "water-tight" compartment separate from the social and class background; but within these limits it is distinctly valuable.

The National Income 1924, by Prof. Bowley and Sir Josiah Stamp (Oxford Univ. Press, 3/6) is the first statistical attempt to estimate the national income since the war and to compare it with pre-war. The estimate is carefully done and contains many useful statistics; but the authors do not succeed in concealing their bias (though they try hard to), which underlies the whole—the desire to show that the workers are better off than pre-war. Their main conclusions are:—(a) wage-earners in 1924 received a smaller proportion of *aggregate* income than in 1911; but (b) after allowing for the effects of super-tax, death-duties, etc., wage-earners received a share that was slightly larger than in 1911; (c) the home-produced social income per head of the population was £84 in 1924 against £45 in 1911. Allowing for a change by about a half in the purchasing power of money since 1911 (90 per

cent. rise of the index number of prices), this gives a *real* income per head from *home* production, about 5 per cent. less in 1924. On the other hand, income from foreign trade and investment is much less.

It is probable that (c) gives too high a figure for 1924. As for (a) and (b) the comparison is seriously biased by the fact that 1911 was a year when real wages were at a very low point, and the big wage-advances secured by the strikes of 1911-12 had not yet shown their effects. Hence, in taking 1911 as their year of comparison the authors have taken a year very favourable to themselves! If they had taken either 1900 or 1914, the so-called "improvement" would have disappeared!

Industrial Fluctuations, by Prof. A. C. Pigou (Macmillan, 25/-) does not so much give a "theory" about the trade cycle as to assemble all the relevant facts and the relevant considerations, and review the weak and strong points of existing theories. As such it is the most complete and up-to-date reference that we have on the subject available in English.

Factors in Industrial Efficiency (H.M. Stationery Office, 5/-) is the second Report of the Balfour Committee, and presents an "official" capitalist point of view. But it is interesting as showing the standpoint of the "progressive" section of British capitalism. The most useful chapter is that describing the various forms and the extent of trusts and combines. Also sections on "standardisation" and recent forms of State assistance to capitalist industry.

It is with especial interest that we turn from these to the announcement that the Labour Research Department hopes to publish this year a book on the economic basis of British Imperialism, giving facts and figures about export of capital and economic "penetration" not previously available.

M. H. D.

In a newly industrialised country such as Mexico, where during the past few years a virtual economic revolution has been taking place—with various politi-

cal reactions—the individual "leader," whether of workers or of exploiters, inevitably fills a position of exceptional prominence. Luis N. Morones, the

Mexican Labour leader, who is described in *Morones of Mexico* (by J. H. Retinger, Labour Publishing Co., 2/6) is still a young man. Ten years ago he was a working electrician. To-day (according to Mr. Cramp) he is the virtual dictator of the small group—the “Grupo Acción”—which controls and directs the Labour movement of Mexico. One may accept Mr. Cramp’s statement of the case without in any way agreeing with his implied hostile criticism of Morones. Dictatorship may be necessary—and beneficial.

Unfortunately, it is a little difficult to gather from this book what kind of Labour ideals Morones stands for. Dr. Retinger is a hero-worshipper, and to him everything that Morones does is good. But when a Pleb reads that the “Grupo Acción” has opened an institute for the training of labour workers “on similar lines to Ruskin College at Oxford,” he may be forgiven for wishing for a rather more critical approach.

The Labour Research Department is to be congratulated wholeheartedly, both on the quality of its recent publications and on the promptness with which it has issued material of use to students and propagandists in dealing with current questions. *Agriculture*, the latest volume in the Labour and Capital Series (6d.) is by H. B. Pointing (one of the lecturers at the N.C.L.C. Summer School last year) and Emile Burns. It is a first-class piece of work, invaluable in view of the Labour Party’s campaign in rural areas. Recent additions to the White Paper Series (1d. each) include an analysis of the Trade Union Bill by W. H. Thompson, and *What’s What in*

China, a description of the forces involved in the struggle in China, and of the interests they represent. Other recently-published White Papers are *The Reform (1) of the Poor Law*, by John Scurr, and half a dozen dealing with “Rivals of the Co-operatives”—the Milk Trust, Grocery and Drapery Concerns, etc. Finally, to the Syllabus Series (6d.) has been added *The Development of Machines in Production*, by A. Serner, “an outline of the history of tools and technology and its effect on social history.” This is a piece of work of interest to every Marxian student, and N.C.L.C. tutors and students should make a special note of it.

J. F. H.

The Builders’ History, by R. W. Postgate (from Plebs League, 1/-, post free 1/9) is a classic piece of Trade Union history, which, now that it is available in this very cheap edition, ought to be on every worker-student’s shelf. The Builders’ Unions played a very prominent part in the early days of Trade Unionism, e.g., in Owenism, and their leaders were prominent figures in the Junta period. Hence, to trace the history of those early struggles of what was then an advance-guard of the working class throws very great light on the story of Trade Unionism as a whole. Beautifully printed by the Pelican Press, with some fine photogravures and written in the author’s usual brilliant style, it makes a book that is a joy to possess. Some of the stories of the early clubs and unions make very amusing and entertaining reading. You *must* buy it, if you haven’t done so already. D.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

- The Peasant War in Germany*, by F. Engels, with Intro. by Dr. Riazanov (Allen & Unwin, 4/6).
- Coal: A Challenge to the National Conscience*, Ed. by Alan Porter (Hogarth Press, 2/6).
- The World Policy of Germany, 1890-1912*, by Otto Hammann (Allen & Unwin, 12/6).
- Religion in Tsarist and Soviet Russia*, by W. P. Coates. Foreword by Geo. Hicks (Anglo-Russian Parly. Comm., 3d.).

The N.C.L.C. at Work



(Reports for this page should be sent to J. P. M. Millar, General Secretary, National Council of Labour Colleges, 62 Hanover Street, Eainburgh.)

NEW LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: The following is a list of the new affiliations obtained in March by the local Colleges: London, 9; Sowerby Division, 3; Peterborough, 2; Belfast, 1; Garw, 1; Southampton, 1.

IS THE NAME OF YOUR COLLEGE HERE? IF NOT, WHY NOT?

I.W.C.E. IN NEW ZEALAND: A Labour College Class has recently been opened in Dunedin and is beginning to get considerable support from local working-class organisations. We hope that Dunedin will soon have a strong Labour College.

NATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL: A leaflet giving full particulars of the Summer School may be had in return for a stamped addressed envelope. Students are requested to book immediately in order to avoid disappointment and to assist Head Office in organising the School.

TRAINING CENTRE: The last date for Divisions sending in the names of the student they are recommending for the Training Centre is 30th June.

SUMMER SESSION: Full use should be made of the Summer Session to run Tutors' Training and other classes, day and week-end schools, etc. Special endeavour should be made to arrange Branch Lectures for the Unions with N.C.L.C. schemes. This is of the greatest importance. Colleges should follow the example of London and other areas by sending to those Union Branches a list of subjects on which they may have short lectures.

TRADE UNION JOURNALS: Congratulations to Alexander Cairns on the articles on *Social History* he is publishing in his Union's Journal, the "Shop Assistant."

LIST OF DAY AND WEEK-END SCHOOLS:
Ipswich, 29th May (M. Starr, 25 New Street, London, S.W.1.)

Altrincham, 23rd and 24th July (E. Redfern, 1 Langdale Avenue, Reddish, Stockport.)

Cromer, 8th May (M. Starr, 25 New Street, London, S.W.1.)

Bedford, 15th May (M. Starr, 25 New Street, London, S.W.1.)

London, 21st and 22nd May (M. Starr, 25 New Street, London, S.W.1.)

Blackburn, 18th and 19th June (J. Hudson, 21 Primrose Street, Nelson, Lancs.)

Birkenhead, 28th and 29th May (J. Hamilton, 11 Channell Road, Fairfield, Liverpool.)

Please apply to the above officials for particulars.

WHAT THE DIVISIONS ARE DOING.

Division 1: Most of the winter classes have now ended, but a series of One-Day Schools is taking their place in such districts as Battersea, Mitcham, Southall and Ilford. Mitcham is starting off with a school on May 29th, conducted by Thomas Ashcroft, who will finish off the day with a reading of "The Insect Play." Further details can be obtained from the London Organiser. Twenty new affiliations have been received from Co-operative organisations, mainly Women's Guilds, during the last quarter. G. Giles' Stepney Class on "Educational Institutions and Theory in Past and Present Class Struggles" has been one of the most successful winter classes. The London Division is granting a scholarship to the N.C.L.C. Training Centre in addition to the one given by the N.C.L.C. Executive. The Women's Committee Conference, held in the Essex Hall, was a great success. Nearly 200 women attended as delegates from nearly one hundred organisations. A. J. Cook was unable, through illness, to attend the N.C.L.C. mass meeting arranged by the Southall N.C.L.C. and Labour Party, but a splendid substitute was found in Miss Ellen Wilkinson, M.P., who got a good reception from the 1,000 people present.

Division 2: The first meeting of the Divisional Council with the representatives of classes was held at the Morris Hall, Southampton, in April, and proved very useful. The Organiser visited the new class at Wyke-Regis which has been

conducted by J. Bowden—subject, "Economic Geography." It bids fair to be one of the most energetic classes in Dorset and is well supported by members of the local A.E.U. Winchester, Bournemouth, Salisbury, Oxford and Southampton are taking a course on the "Crises in China." Littlehampton class report a most successful social and dance to raise funds. All comrades are greatly cheered by the response, but unfortunately the same cannot be said by the venture of the Reading class. Arrangements for some open-air rallies are in hand for the following:—Littlehampton, Wyke and Dorchester. Salisbury is considering the matter and would welcome a joint gathering with Andover, Eastleigh, Winchester, Southampton and Bournemouth Plebeians. What about it Oxford, Reading and Portsmouth? Comrade Lloyd, of Aldershot, is determined to make his area a strong N.C.L.C. centre.

Division 3: Peterborough's Secretary was pleased with the Day School held on 20th March. Wards of the L.P. are affiliated there and the Co-operative Educational Committee has been approached and a N.U.D.A.W. lecture arranged. A dance has assisted financially. M. H. Dobb brought a much-appreciated course to an end. Special A.U.B.T.W. lectures are to be given at Norwich, Cambridge, and Felixstowe and meetings arranged with Colchester T.C. and High Wycombe Trades Council. Southend proposes running a series of Day Schools and the Women's Co-operative Guild will have a special lecture on "Education in Soviet Russia." Comrade Parson's services were further utilised at an exceptionally good Day School. Bedford ran a successful lantern lecture. Cambridge ran a useful School and the Organiser spoke at the opening of the New Labour Club. March Trades Council has a lecture arranged. Thanks to the decision of the Eastern D.C. of the N.U.R. to circulate to its forty-five branches copies of the Labour College proposals, the branches will be better able to mandate their delegates for the A.G.M. Colleges are asked to accept as quickly as possible the arrangements suggested in the circular. Comrade Pocock has given us permission to hold the Divisional Conference at the Labour College, London, on 21st and 22nd May. J. F. Horrabin (*Uses of Economic Geography*), Tom Ashcroft (*Work of*

Labour College) and Comrade Shi (*Labour in China*) have promised to assist. Delegates requiring assisted fares must be nominated at once.

Division 4: Congratulations are due to Comrade Richards, of Newport, for running a social which produced £11 for the College Funds and gave extra publicity to College work. Theo. Griffiths, an N.C.L.C. student, has been appointed part-time Labour Party Agent.

Division 5: No report.

Division 6: No report.

Division 7: York Labour College held a successful Conference with E. C. Wilkinson, M.P. and J. F. Horrabin as speakers. There were about five to six hundred present.

Division 8: The Annual Meeting of the Manchester and District College will be held in the Caxton Hall, Chapel Street, Salford, on Saturday, April 23rd, at 3 p.m. The North Lincs. Annual Meeting will be held in the Clothlookers' Clubroom, 20 Lord Street (West), Blackburn, on May 7th, at 3 p.m. Reports from the three areas show a very substantial amount of work done. Students desiring to enrol in Tutors' Training Classes should write at once to J. Hamilton, 11 Channell Road, Fairfield, Liverpool. South-East Lancashire area is offering lectures to N.C.L.C. Union Branches on the following subjects:—"The Trade Union Movement and The Law"; "Trade Unions and Politics"; "Is a Political Levy a Good Thing?"; "Pages from Trade Union History"; "Will Americanism Revive Trade?"; "Why is Trade Bad?"; "The Happenings in China and Why"; "The Empire and The Worker." Rawtenstall Tutors' Training Class has begun. Circulars have gone out to Branches of Unions with N.C.L.C. Schemes stating that we are prepared to give Branch Lectures on the "Legal Attack on Trade Unionism" and other topical subjects. A Tutors' Training Class is to start in Oldham after Easter. The Manchester Plebs Players have done good service in the Manchester District. The Chorley Branch N.C.L.C. will hold a Day School on May 1st. Subject for discussion: "The Government Attack on Trade Unionism." Lecturers: J. Hamilton and A. Crook. A feature of the U.D.C. and Board of Guardians elections in this area has been the successes of a number of candidates actively associated with the N.C.L.C. Our Class Secretaries at

Runcorn and Skelmersdale, H. Thomas and S. March, for instance, were elected to the local U.D.C. An active supporter, D. McCarthy, a victimised miner, easily topped the poll at Skelmersdale.

Division 9: There were 129 organisations represented at the Conference at Durham on March 26th, when Ellen Wilkinson, M.P., and J. P. M. Millar were the speakers. Thirty-six women's sections were represented. The remarkable feature of the Conference were the number of women who attended. Successful week-end schools were held at Willington and Wingate, Wheatley Hill and Shotton on April 9th and 10th. Will Lawther lectured at Willington and Mark Starr at Wingate, Shotton and Wheatley Hill. Easter week-end found the North-Eastern Labour College holding its week-end schools at Newcastle with Comrades Coxon, Edwards and Heslop as lecturers. Sunderland will make its first attempt at running a week-end school this Easter with Comrade D. B. Lawley as lecturer.

Division 10 (Scotland): Edinburgh College has had a successful year. Students have greatly helped in raising finance. £20 was raised by one dance alone and over £50 was cleared by a series of lantern lectures by John S. Clarke. Edinburgh and Glasgow have both lists of summer classes. Glasgow College had a lantern lecture by W. Paul. Renfrewshire is arranging a Tutors' Class and Dundee has been more successful this year than for many years past. Ayrshire finishes with a balance in hand.

Division 11 (Ireland): The Belfast Labour College balance sheet shows a substantial increase in affiliation fees and total income over the previous year. For the summer session in Belfast a class on *The History of Philosophy* and a Discussion Class have been started. A list of fifteen lectures are available for branch meetings and has been forwarded to all affiliated organisations.

Division 12: Mansfield College has been severely hit during the month. Harry Allcock, whom we all loved and admired, died very suddenly. He was one of the founders of the Mansfield College and made the first efforts in the district to run College classes. He has been President of the College from its

inception up to quite recently. He will also be missed as checkweigher at Rufford Colliery. He had an inimitable way of putting his points in speeches and discussion, and some of his forceful illustrations many of us will long remember. The Secretary of the Mansfield College has been compelled to leave the town owing to the boycott of her husband's business, consequent upon their joint activities in the cause of the workers. Mrs. Smith has not spared herself in the working-class cause, and the price she is having to pay for her devotion is a heavy one. To have to sell house, business and home and begin all over again is a striking commentary on the lengths to which the vindictiveness of our opponents will go. Ilkeston, Heanor, Northampton are all having Day Schools during the month. Training Classes are commencing in Nottingham and Sutton-in-Ashfield, and the activities of the Colleges generally are being kept up to play a real part in the struggle for Trade Union rights which will be waged in the coming months.

The LABOUR MONTHLY

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Notes of the Month.

The I.L.P. Conference.

The Significance of the
Chinese Revolution.

JOE FINEBERG

The Trade Union Bill.

R. COPPOCK—

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The PLEBS Bookshelf



I SEEM to spend half my space in this page of THE PLEBS bemoaning the fact that publishers constantly bring out books for which there is certainly a big working-class public, and as regularly cut themselves off from that public by issuing said books at prohibitive prices. Here is another volume which you, dear reader, are hereby urged to beg, borrow or steal, since it is 100 to 1 that you won't be able to afford to buy it:—*King Goshawk and the Birds*, by Eimar O'Duffy (Macmillan, 7/6). Let us hope and pray for a cheap edition—it could surely be done at 2/6—as soon as may be. When that day comes Mr. O'Duffy will have a thousand readers for every dozen he has at present—and they will, I fancy, be readers more after his own heart than many of those with seven-and-sixpences to spare.

King Goshawk is a Wheat King. As he observes to his wife, "The Wheat of the world is mine. Tea, Sugar, and Milk are my vassals. Coal and Oil are my tributaries." But his wife is not quite happy. She remembers a sentimental evening in their courting days, when she and Goshawk had listened together to the nightingales, and she had sighed "How sad to think how many birds are singing all over the world that I can never hear" (she was evidently a fitting mate for a Big Business man); and Goshawk had answered "Darling, when I have come into my kingdom you shall have all the song-birds in the world for your very own." So King Goshawk swears to fulfil his promise, and the following paragraph appears in the papers shortly afterwards:—

A New York message just received states that King Goshawk has completed negotiations for the purchase of all the blackbirds, robins, larks, and nightingales in the world. The vast bulk of these will be removed at an early date to the great park of Goshawk Palace, but a few will be kept in aviaries near the principal cities for the delectation of their inhabitants.

On King Goshawk's well-known principle that "Anything free is not

valued," there will be a small charge for admission to these aviaries.

King Goshawk deserves the gratitude of the public for having thus taken one more step in harnessing Nature to the service of mankind.

Now the whole of mankind, having by this time become thoroughly docile wage-slaves, accepts this decree of Goshawk's meekly and without protest; with the exception of a Philosopher, resident in Dublin. He tries vainly to arouse in his fellows a sense of indignation; but they are more interested in Political Democracy than in song-birds, and are hot in a great struggle between Coddo (who stands for Peace, Unity and Freedom) and O'Codd (who stands for Tranquillity, Homogeneity and Liberty); so they throw the Philosopher into the river. Whereupon he ascends to the 20th heaven, returning to earth with the hero Cuchulain (of legendary fame), whom he urges to do battle with the power of Goshawk. What Cuchulain thought of the modern world and of the men and women who lived in, and accepted, it; of his contests with police, Moral Censors, Boodleguts the Tripe King, Scallion the Onion King; of how he carried off Boodleguts' daughter, and begat a son who carried on his work; of this son's adventures among Limited Companies, modern newspapers, advanced women, Millionaires, the Less Rich, the Merely Rich, etc., etc., etc.—all these things I must leave you to discover from the book itself, contenting myself with remarking that you have two or three joyous hours in front of you.

But I shall squeeze in just one more quotation—from the chapter which describes how Cuchulain, when he arrived on earth, put on certain garments procured for him by the Philosopher:—

Be sure that Cuchulain in donning the trousers and tucking in the shirt showed no more grace or dignity than your mortal man—poet, priest, politician, soldier, average fool, or father of ten. I wish indeed that all men

who hold position or notoriety could be compelled to put on their trousers publicly at least once a year : by which means we should rid ourselves of a vast quantity of that humbug and hero-worship which make the world intolerable for honest and self-reliant men. For, as the proverb says, no man is a hero to his valet; the reason being that the valet sees the hero getting into his trousers.

* * *

From *King Goshawk* to a book of a very different sort—*Jew Süß*, translated from the German of Lion Feuchtwanger. (Ten shillings is the price of this one—but there will doubtless be a cheap edition some day: meantime, besiege the libraries for it.) The historical novel—like many orthodox books of history, but even more so!—is usually “tushery.” Cloak-and-sword romance is of all things (perhaps excepting detective stories) the most wearisome. But here is a book

which does in sober truth make a dead chapter of history live again. Its scene is laid in the eighteenth century Germany, and its characters are not a hero and a heroine and a villain, but the people—courtiers, rulers, diplomats, prelates, traders, moneylenders, bourgeoisie—of a whole State. It is the whole eighteenth century world in miniature: the world of absolute monarchs, nobles with feudal rights, burghers jealous for their civic privileges, bishops who believed not a word of the faith they formally professed—and a great mass of common people who toiled and sweated, and paid taxes, and fought their masters' wars: the world which the French Revolution smashed once and for all. If it be the business of history not merely to pile up statistics, nor even solely to show social forces at work, but to make us realise what those forces meant in terms of flesh and blood—how human beings like ourselves felt them and reacted to them—then *Jew Süß* is history indeed. Read it. It's the sort of book that definitely widens one's field of vision.

It is not a book from which one can quote extracts. It gets its effects “in the mass,” and it has strangely little dialogue. It is, in fact, to a very large extent, a new kind of novel, and its author, one feels, has carefully studied the technique of the cinema, and adapted its methods to his purpose of writing an historical novel. There is the same quick succession of episodes, and rapid change of scene, as in a film; the same concentration on action, rather than dialogue. There are, occasionally, “close-ups” of one or two leading characters, but for the most part the men and women of the book play their parts against a “crowd” background. The book, just as it stands, could be translated into a magnificent film. In the meantime, it is emphatically a book to be read.

J. F. H.



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