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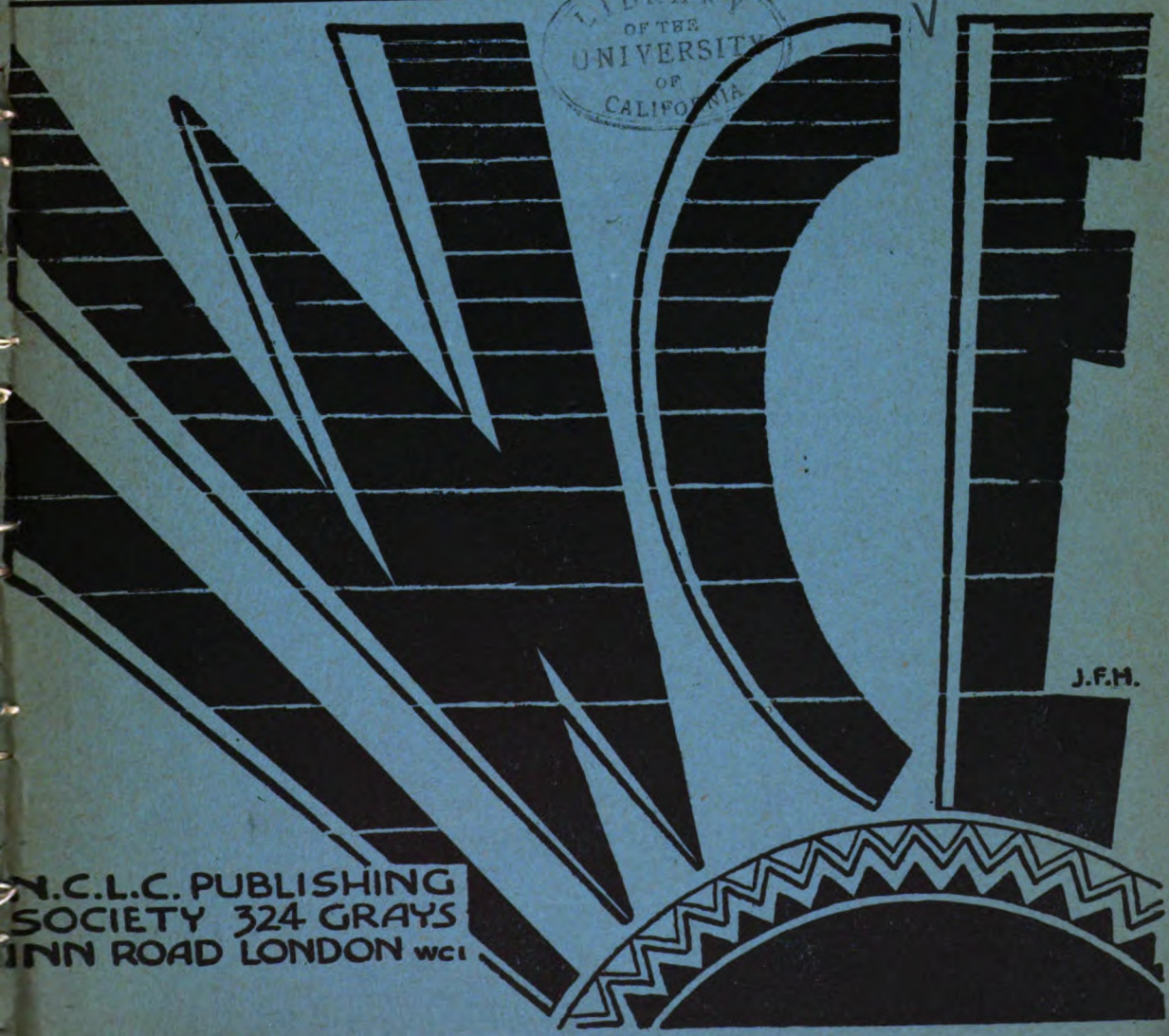
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THE PLEBS

Organ of the National Council of Labour Colleges

VOL. XX.

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 1928.

No. 9

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AN OPEN LETTER TO A NEW STUDENT *(but Old Hands may read it)*

DEAR Comrade,—You've made up your mind that education matters, and you're joining an N.C.L.C. Class. Here's wishing you luck—and may you be one of us for years to come! We're not a close corporation—we welcome new recruits. In fact, we hope you'll be helping us to "catch your pal" before the class is many weeks old.

You may not know much about the history of our movement. Well, we're not exactly young. We've got a history. It will be twenty years next February since the first number of *The PLEBS* was pub-

lished by a bunch of workingmen students who had realised that if workers wanted an education that would help them in their day-to-day struggle against Capitalism, they would have to look after the providing of it for themselves. Twenty years is a nice bit of time—time enough, praise be, for a sound idea to take root, and grow, and flourish far beyond the expectations of its planters. That has been, in brief, the story of our movement.

Looking Back.

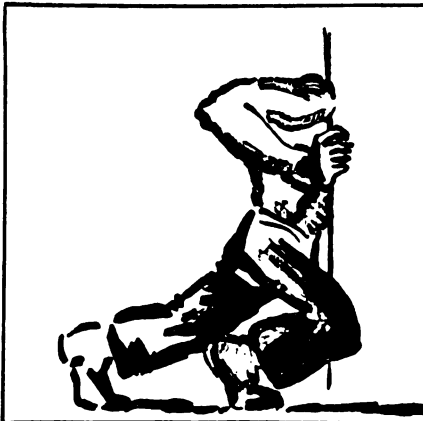
They were a small bunch, the pioneers of 1909. And they'd precious little in the way

of money, or even experience. (Journalistic or propagandist experience, that is; of wage-slave experience they'd had their share—and that was the fact that mattered.) But of courage and enthusiasm they had plenty. They founded a College and a monthly magazine—on enthusiasm. *And on faith in their fellow-workers.*

It hasn't by any means been roses all the way! We've been up to the ears in debt pretty often (we're none too flush at the present moment). But steadily the idea from which the movement grew—*Independent Working-Class Education*—gained more and more converts. The original College in London was followed by

your pal more effectively than any outsider can do it. You can get us a new reader for this magazine—if you're keen enough to try.

We've got to make a big effort this winter. You know how things have been during the last couple of years—a whole lot of indifference, apathy, pessimism (and shortness of money). Our own movement, like every other working-class organisation, has had to fight hard to keep its head above water. Liabilities and responsibilities have piled up. New support has been hard to get—we've been lucky if old friends haven't fallen away. But during this next six months, with your help, we're going not



WE'VE BEEN PUSHING

Independent Working-Class Education through The PLEBS for nearly 20 years. Lend us your shoulder to help us shove up the circulation this winter.

colleges and classes in every part of the country. The National Council of Labour Colleges was formed. Trade Unions came to its support. More and more Trade Unions. At the present time the N.C.L.C. has more direct working-class support than any other workers' educational organisation in the world (outside of Russia anyway).

Looking Forward.

Yet even now not half the work is being done that ought to be done. "The harvest truly is plenteous. . . ." That's why we're asking you, now at the outset, to come in and take a hand in the job of extending the movement. Don't say you're not able. It's been chaps like you—plain worker-students—who've made The PLEBS and the Labour College movement. *You* can put the case for working-class education to

merely to regain any lost ground, but to make a few new records. We want to celebrate our twentieth birthday by having a bigger total of students in our classes, and a bigger circulation for The PLEBS than ever before. It means work. It means sacrifice. It means sticking at it.

Will you give us a hand right away?

Yours frat. J.F.H.

P.S.—JOIN THE PLEBS LEAGUE & STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION AND IF THERE IS NO GROUP IN YOUR AREA—START ONE!

*Ten minutes Talks with
New Students:*

8-IS THE MIND A MERE MIRROR?

By J. P. M. MILLAR

IN these Talks the question now arises as to whether the mind simply reproduces within itself what the senses perceive outside. The fact is that there is no room in our heads for the numberless qualities of the things we experience. If our idea of a blackleg were identical with the blackleg then we should know the number of hairs on his head and the number of nails in his boots. In other words the mind does not simply reproduce a mental model of the blackleg. If it did we should be as far away as ever from understanding what a blackleg was, because we have found that understanding or thinking is the faculty of being able, for example, to extract the element that goes to make a blackleg.

That is the new feature brought in by the mind which, therefore, does not simply reflect mirror-like the outside world. The mind is of value to us because it extracts the common elements from things. It unifies the many different kinds of blackleg into the blackleg in general. We can illustrate the value of this process by referring to the

match-making machine. What would be the use of the machine if it took in at one end blocks of wood and quantities of phosphorus and turned out at the other end the same blocks of wood and the same quantities of phosphorus? The machine's value lies in the fact that it transforms the wood and phosphorus into matches. In the same way the mind, by means of the senses, receives impressions of all sorts of different blacklegs, white blacklegs, black blacklegs, yellow blacklegs, sober blacklegs and drunk blacklegs and turns out the idea or thought of the blackleg—the blackleg in general.

It is obvious that the mind cannot pick out the common feature of a series of impressions unless it is able to recognise the exceptional features—the features, for instance, that are not common to all blacklegs. It could not say what a blackleg was unless it was able to ignore the fact that most workers are not blacklegs, that some blacklegs have white hair and that some have none at all, that some blacklegs have an Oxford accent and some a Hoxton. The two processes are more inseparable than the corpse and the undertaker!

The mind, therefore, is the faculty of unifying and at the same time of *distinguishing*. Were it not able to distinguish, a farmer might try to get milk from a scrubbing brush and an allotment-holder might sow threepenny bits and hope for a crop of half-crowns.

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SHAW MISSES THE BANKS

By JOBANE

NOW that the first flush of enthusiasm over Shaw's latest contribution to Socialist literature has subsided, we may, I think, level some definite charges of incompleteness, even unreliability, against *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*, without being charged with meticulousness.

The section which to me seems most unacceptable as it stands is that "explaining" banking methods. Throughout the banking and allied chapters many little inaccuracies abound, but here we can deal only with the main theme.

G.B.S. states that the banker is enabled to make his profit and treat his customers to many pretty conveniences by the simple process of lending 17/- out of every £1 deposited with him. Does he? Not George Bernard Shaw likely! Shaw's statement, considered as a guide for an intelligent woman, is so incomplete, and falls so far short of the truth, as to be worth practically nothing.

How They Work It.

If we examine a banker's balance sheet we find something of greater significance. I attach an abbreviation (in sub-heads only) of the Statement published for July, 1928, by the London Clearing Bankers:—

| | | | |
|---|---------------------|-----|------------|
| ASSETS (000's omitted). | | | |
| Coin, Notes, etc. | ... | ... | £197,051 |
| Loans, Investments, Advances, | ... | ... | |
| etc., etc., etc. | ... | ... | £1,885,403 |
| LIABILITIES. | | | |
| Capital, Reserves, etc., etc. | ... | ... | £136,588 |
| Current and Deposit Accounts, | ... | ... | |
| etc. etc. | ... | ... | £1,945,866 |
| Ratio of cash to Current, etc., Accounts, | 11.03 | | |
| | (i.e., 2/2 per £1). | | |

The banker draws interest on the £1,885,403,000 not on £167,492,350 as Shaw would have us believe.

There is not, not even including "fiduciary" Treasury notes, anything like the amount of "hard cash" in the country as is

represented in the above balance sheet. How then is the game played, since Shaw's explanation misses the facts?

The Magic Wand.

As G.B.S. points out, the banker knows that in any one day he will be called on to pay only a small fraction of his liabilities in "hard cash," so he keeps about 10 per cent. in hand to be on the safe side. The banker who receives from a customer (say) £10 knows that at the worst only about £1 will be called for on any one day. He could therefore lend £9 as Shaw reasons, but he knows that if he keeps the whole £10 he can lend 90 "paper" pounds. It is the second course he adopts and collects interest on the £90. Hence the beautiful bank buildings and the most powerful oligarchy of all times. The bankers' books are balanced by showing the spare £90 as a deposit.

Shaw objects to inflation with considerable vehemence, and it is generally true that anything which tampers "unnaturally" with the level of prices is an unmitigated evil. His wrath, however, at Austria, Germany and Russia is rather pointless when one considers that his friend the Gold Standard banker can and does do exactly that thing which he so abhors. The banker, without the check of a Parliament (good, bad or indifferent) can inflate and deflate at his own sweet will—in his search for private gain.

Day-by-Day Inflation.

The banker (remember the percentage basis) can give his client the right to draw, say, £1,000, which he never possessed and which never existed. On one side of his account he enters "Deposit," £1,000, and on the other "Loan to Customer," £1,000. The customer will in all probability draw on his account by means of cheques, and despite Shaw's contention to the contrary, a cheque is money since it "does the money

work." Thus does the banker create money and inflate.

It is this form of inflation which is generally accepted as the cause of the capitalist phenomenon of trade booms. It is the subsequent deflation which causes the depression, but we cannot elaborate that aspect here.

The banker has been enabled thus to inflate because of the enormous increase in productivity which has taken place, and he has soaked up most of this increase to himself. The money he created was socially necessary for the distribution of goods. The bankers' power in this direction is a

tremendous danger to a Labour-governed society.

A Big Man's Game.

In closing it must be noted that the Post Office Savings Bank, Trustee Banks and the Municipal Banks, so approved by Shaw, do *not* possess this Midas touch. The big bankers keep the magic wand in their own clutches.

By omitting all this, Shaw suggests that the intelligent woman does not need to know about it. The intelligent woman—and man—*does*; and because this is so members of the movement should keep on the look-out for a forthcoming PLEBS textbook.

The Story of Trade Unionism

By R. W. POSTGATE

(i) LOOK UNTO THE ROCK

THE early British trade unions were the parents of most of the trade unions of the world. They were the direct forefathers of the unions of to-day in Canada, Australia, South Africa, and also in the United States. The German unions were founded, not indeed in imitation of the British unions, but under the influence of their history. Through the First International, even, the British unions were largely instrumental in spreading trade union principles in Belgium, France, Italy and Spain. But even if we are able to trace the modern trade unions back to the early British "trade club," that does not mean that we have found their ultimate origin. We can look a long way back; but the furthest that we can see is to the middle of the eighteenth century. And the last thing that we can see is—whether you like it or not—the sign of an English public-house.

At one time it used to be thought that the trade unions were descended from the

guilds of the Middle Ages. This is now known not to be true. Possibly there is in one case some connection with the Middle Ages. The Stonemasons throughout their recorded history have been "turbulent men" and in the reign of Edward III. their "alliances and covines"—some form of secret unions—were forbidden. Moreover, the elaborate organisation of the Freemasons is based, as is clear to anyone who has a general knowledge of it, upon the actual processes of stone masonry. It is possible that the old "covines" survived into the eighteenth century as part of the Freemasons. It is possible, too, that in 1717 when "speculative masonry" overbore "operative masonry" among the Freemasons, that some "operative lodges" survived, to turn up again as lodges of the Operative Stonemasons' union. Those who are interested in this speculation may note that in 1834 the Duke of Sussex, as Grand Master Mason, issued an order for a "purge" of the lodges of the Freemasons, which he feared were going to be drawn like union branches into the great strikes of that year. But all this is no more than speculation on what is "possible": the only fact we know is that there is no evidence that enables us to date trade unionism earlier than, at the most, 1700.

There is record of a society of painters in 1749 in London, and in 1764 the Edinburgh masons had an active union. Francis Place, the tailor, about 1795, drafted rules

for small clubs in every sort of trade; and more and more instances are accidentally mentioned, in the newspapers or otherwise, as time goes on. Most of them, it is clear, met at a public house; all of them were confined to members of a particular craft in a particular district. Some early trade unions even took their name from the "pub." For example, we find the "Marquis of Granby Carpenters" in 1816, and the "Running Horse Society of Carpenters" in 1800, and as late as 1867 the two Coachmakers' Unions were known as the "Globe Society" and the "Crown Society." One wonders how the numerous "Bricklayers' Arms," "Blacksmiths' Arms" and "Jolly Painters" up and down the country get their names. Was it not perhaps from the meetings of such early trade unions?

We are very lucky in that there is still in existence—121 years old—an ancient Minute Book and Account Book of one of these early societies, the Preston Joiners. In it we can see slowly unfolded before us the process by which a small trade club began to take on the functions of a union. The first entries are:—

| | | s. | d. |
|--------|----------------------------------|----|----|
| 1807 | | | |
| Feb. 9 | By 1 Quire of paper | 1 | 6 |
| | By Ale 4 glasses | 0 | 8 |
| | By 2 Books | 0 | 8 |
| 25 | By Expences of Come ^e | | |
| | Meeting | 8 | 8 |
| 27 | By 8 Glasses of Ale | 1 | 4 |

Quite probably the Preston joiners had been meeting in the local inn for a fraternal glass of ale for years before they bought "one quire of paper" and set up a committee, with the intent of remonstrating (possibly) against some breach of custom. Almost at once they began to admit new members to the craft (or reject them, presumably) and so claim some control of the conditions of their trade. Before long we find an entry for "writeing" to the employers—an outside hand, perhaps a lawyer's clerk, was employed—and when the "writeing" had no effect, then comes

the entry "to turn-outs." It is easy to guess, even if one has not read accounts of early strikes, what a "turn-out" is. The men who "turned out" were also supported while going to other towns in search of work, and thus we find "tramp money" entered. By this time the process is complete, and, as a naturalist can watch a tadpole turning into a frog, we have watched the festive Preston joiners' club turn into a full-blown trade union.

But the Preston joiners were lucky. Not all unions had so peaceful a life. In 1799 and 1800 two Combination Acts were passed which made trade unions illegal. The police and Government of the reign of George III. were too inefficient for this to mean that trade unions were in fact driven out of existence. They could and did still continue so long as they were circumspect and secret. Some disguised themselves as friendly societies. But if they were active, they, or at least their most prominent members, were at the mercy of any spiteful employer's denunciation. Conviction was almost certain: and, under the conspiracy laws, long terms of imprisonment and even public whippings were distributed.

The men who in face of such oppression kept trade unions alive were driven to strange expedients. The Ironfounders used to meet at night and in secret on the desolate moors of Yorkshire; their records and minute books they kept buried in the earth. The London tailors organised themselves almost militarily, giving strict obedience to a committee of five called "The Town," elected from their chosen public-houses, called "Flint" houses. Those who were spies and blacklegs were apt to meet with very rough treatment: in Dublin, indeed, if the employers' statements are to be trusted, the workers' Board of Green Cloth (as it was called) held the city in a ruthless grip.

Every union had a solemn ceremonial through which every member had to

DON'T LEAVE PUSHING THE MOVEMENT

to the other fellow. He's probably counting on you.

pass. The members were dressed up in fantastic garments, with axes, masks or cocked hats, and the applicant had to swear an oath and pray that if he divulged the rules of the union he might die. A sword was pointed at his bared breast, or a skeleton (or its picture) put before his eyes as he did so. The "worthy brothers" concluded their ritual with prayers and recitations which recalled the Church services. Even after the Combination Laws were repealed, in 1824 and 1825, these solemn practices were continued. The "lodge" into which a man was initiated, often the same trade club as had been in existence twenty or more years before, had now very frequently become a branch of a bigger union, such as the Ironfounders (1810) or the Operative Builders (1832). But, though the big union had come into existence, it was still the lodge which was the living unit. The lodge kept its own funds, only remitting to the centre the surplus which the calls of other lodges for sickness or strike benefit required. It decided who should receive sickness pay, how much and how long. It generally also decided what demands should be made on the employers, and whether a strike should be called or not. As may be imagined, trade union history for some forty years (say, 1825-1865) is consequently a fine confusion. But gradually, during these years, the union members were transferring powers to the headquarters from the lodges, until there is to-day no union which still leaves these wide liberties to its branches. Nor is there any which practises initiations or provides beer from the fund, though some require their members to address each other as "worthy brother."

Painters and smiths and others had no doubt for many centuries been meeting together at the local public house for a friendly glass. We may pause at this point to ask why it was at this time that these friendly meetings should have led to the appearance of trade unionism. The reply is that in the Middle Ages there was still probability that in any trade a journeyman would become a master. A journeyman-tailor stood a fair chance if he was a skilled

and fortunate man of ending his life in reasonable comfort and dignity as a master-tailor. He would not for long combine with other journeymen-tailors to oppose the masters; for, with the hopes he held, he would feel he was quite probably only doing what would in the future be an injury to himself. But in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as the workshops of the masters grew larger and larger, as their capital increased and the old guilds had disappeared, it became clear to the slowest-minded worker that his chance of becoming a master was very small. In an old tailoring shop with three or four journeymen to one master, a journeyman stood some chance of advancement to mastership. What chance did he stand in a textile factory which counted its hands by hundreds? or in a mine or ironworks which counted them by thousands? Luck apart, he stood none. It was quite clear that ninety-nine out of a hundred workers could now never become their own masters. The upward path had been closed, and the masters and employed faced one another as hostile classes, between whom an impassable trench had been dug. Upon this deep division trade unionism was founded, and it depends upon it to-day. Without the consciousness of this class-division a union does not live. Its members may be held together for a while by sickness benefits, or by jealousy of another craft, but sooner or later it will be attacked by the slow decay which is eating away the American Federation of Labour. This does not necessarily mean that a union must be engaged in ceaseless conflicts, night and day, with the employers. With the bitterest enemy one has to sign truces and make temporary agreements. But these temporary agreements must never pass into a permanent policy of peace if the union is to live.

In the early days of trade unionism there was no chance that they would. The employers had (as they still have) a much clearer idea of the true state of affairs. They greeted every effort of their workers to defend themselves as a crime. They resurrected ancient laws to have trade union organisers deported. They locked out

members of the unions systematically, town after town, till the unions' funds were destroyed. They believed it good business to pay as low wages and work as long hours as human nature would permit. There were, indeed, many employers who regretted this policy, as low wages injured the home market; and considered that their rivals ought to pay better wages. But they did not possess the ear of the mass of the manufacturers, who were engaged in producing for export to the colonies or the continent. As the British coalowners and iron masters to-day, the Victorian masters could bear with fortitude the misery of their employees if they were sure of a foreign market.

Before the Israelites entered the land of Canaan, Moses was granted from the mountain-top a sight of the promised land. At the commencement of this difficult and formative period, in 1833 and 1834, the unions, led by the famous Robert Owen, were granted a Pisgah-sight of what will be their ultimate achievement, and an outline of what will be their ultimate organisation. They reached out their hands to grasp what they saw. They failed, and stumbled heavily, because their object was in the far distance. Since then, for many years we have struggled through the valley and the jungle till the promised land which they saw gleaming in the distance is nearer at hand.

Robert Owen was a self-made cotton-spinner who, amid the general complacency, realised that the system of competition and private capitalism was leading to wretchedness and misery. He tried various experiments, such as communist colonies, to introduce universal co-operation, and spent his fortune freely over them. In the year 1832 he thought that the sudden growth of trade unions would provide for him the weapon for which he was looking. He travelled up and down the country earnestly addressing lodge meetings, and receiving in return an equally patient and earnest attention. First of all a great Operative Builders' Union was formed; then in 1833 a great Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, to which the

workers of all trades belonged. Its membership, in the first two or three months of its existence, passed the half-million figure. All trades, divided into their appropriate sections, were for the first time united into one union. The Union adopted in full Owen's plans. He did not believe in political action (he could not, for not a single working man had the vote) and he relied upon two forms of trade union action—the strike and co-operative employment. The strike was to be used to secure shorter hours and better conditions, but the chief strength of the unions, and the bulk of their funds, were to be put into "guilds" which would undertake work directly. Before long, as the sole possessors of labour, the union-guilds would have squeezed out the private capitalist. There would be no more hopeless walking the streets for jobs, no senseless waves of prosperity followed by ruin, no slums and poverty. The accounts between each guild would be simply adjusted at headquarters by calculation of the labour time involved; the democratic management of the unions would, casually and imperceptibly, have extinguished the existing superfluous political framework. "See then," exclaimed one of the union journals, "the King of England becomes only President of the trade unions." Workers' control and a socialised state seemed in the unions' grasp, and the employing class was thoroughly scared. In 1834 a combined and shattering attack was made upon the Grand Trade Union. The employers entered everywhere that they could into conflicts with it. Then they concerted an attack by presenting the "Document," a paper forswearing trade unionism which every worker was compelled to sign. The Government seized upon the union organisers and sentenced six of them to seven years' transportation. They are known to us as the Dorchester Labourers, and they count among the early martyrs of trade unionism. Before long the union was bankrupt, and the strikes were lost. In the autumn of 1834 it broke up. Each section, diminished in numbers, resumed its path as a separate union, until in the 'sixties came a fresh step forward

(To be concluded next month.)

THE RUSSIAN MINER

by NESS EDWARDS

ANYONE who attempts to depict an organised mining industry performs a task of great importance for the British miners in particular, and the British working class in general. To the average British miner today the position appears hopeless, with only an impending spread of this hopelessness. In areas like Blaina, Abertillery, Maesteg, etc., with practically the whole of the collieries closed, the miners' organisation helpless, the boards of guardians and councils bankrupt—in these places it is highly important to indicate some ray of

just under £1 per ton with a man shift output of 12cwts. British costs are 14/10 with a man shift output of 20cwts. The Russian hewer works a six-hour bank to bank shift, while the day-wagemen work an eight-hour bank to bank shift. This compares favourably with the British miners' average eight-hour day.

To indicate the progress of the total production the following figures are quoted:—

| | tons per annum. |
|--------------|-----------------|
| 1913 | 28,500,000 |
| 1920-1 | 7,600,000 |
| 1921-5 | 16,400,000 |
| 1925-6 | 31,000,000 |
| 1927-8 | 35,500,000 |

Too much reliance must not be placed on these figures as an indication of increasing efficiency, as we are informed that the man shift output has increased only by $\frac{1}{2}$ cwt.

TO THE LAST DROP

We are delighted (at least if we are shareholders) when company presidents and directors effect a combination with another corporation in the same line of business, but we expect our premiers and presidents to maintain our national independence to the last drop of our blood. J. B. S. Haldane in *Possible Worlds and Other Essays*.

hope by holding up the example of the possible.

And that possibility becomes a real hope when shown to be an actuality in some other mining industry. John Strachey has done a real service to the Miners' Federation in writing his booklet.* The experience of our Russian comrades will be a useful guide in tackling our job, and this job will be no lighter than that of the Russians by the time the British coal-owners have finished with the industry. But although in these forty-eight pages he has packed plenty of meat, the miner-reader itches to ask dozens of questions "about it and about."

Output and Costs.

The first part of the book tells us that the Russian cost of production this year is

* *Workers' Control in the Russian Mining Industry*, by John Strachey. With foreword by A. J. Cook (New Leader, Ltd., 6d.).

despite considerable "mechanicalisation."

The devastation of the coalfields, the flooding and wrecking of winding engines, and the loss of skilled miners due to the calls of the Red Army are emphasised, and give one a good idea of the problem which the Russians have gone a long way to overcome.

Where the Union comes in.

The structure of the controlling organisation is what one expects. The technical staff operates in conjunction with the trade union. The supreme authority is the Central Management of the Mining and Fuel Industry, this in turn being a section of the Supreme Economic Council, which controls all forms of production and distribution. The Central Management controls the production and distribution of oil, coal, ore, and turf, each industry being conducted by a special section of the Central Management. The author con-

fines himself to that section which deals with coal production. This section is further split up into twelve trusts, which control the twelve coalfields. To each trust the Central Management allots its quota of capital and production. Each trust then allots a quota of capital and production to what are called "Rudnicks." We gather that these "Rudnicks" approximate to councils which control a group of collieries situated in the same locality, having ties of a technical, geological, and geographical character. (The author is somewhat confused on this point, as we are also told that the Rudnick is similar to our Lodges.) The Rudnick is again composed of representatives of the trade union and the technicians, and exercises authority over local production and all that concerns it.

Into this sketch of an organisation the author puts the conditions of the miners, rates and methods of pay, etc., which permits one to get the impression that the Russian miners have a far better life than the miners in this country. This booklet deserves a wide circulation, even though it is far from containing all that a miner student would desire to know about the Russian mining industry.

HYNDMAN

The National-Socialist

By W. COXON

HM. HYNDMAN'S understanding of Marxism will always be a somewhat contentious matter. But his persistence in urging his followers to study Socialism, as distinct from preaching it, must commend him to every I.W.C.E.r. In a group of men of first-rate ability—Bax, Morris, Carpenter and others—he yet stands out as a figure of real stature.

He consistently stood for the class-struggle concept of Socialism, and though his attitude towards Trade Unions was that of an out-and-out "political," he yet supported the use of the strike weapon. His full-blooded hatred of every sort of

tyranny led him to courageous assistance of the popular movements in India, Ireland and Poland; and his activities on behalf of the Right to Free Speech here in Britain (leading to his conviction) earn one's admiration.

And yet, reading the life of him by F. J. Gould recently published,* one is staggered—despite the author's specious pleadings—at Hyndman's internationalist outlook, his anti-Jewish prejudices, his distrust for the German Socialist movement. His writing on the "German Menace" prove conclusively that he still believed that this country would lead the way to Social Democracy. Whatever might be said of the International movement prior to the war, he, with other Socialist writers, helped to sow the seeds of discord. His failure to understand Modern Imperialism led him to take the position he did during the war of 1914-1918. His bitter opposition to all attempts at mediation during the holocaust portrays him, in spite of the author's arguments and the preface by Thomas Kennedy, as an out-and-out jingo. But those who serve their masters receive their reward and so at the end of the war we find the Conservative *Morning Post* suggesting that he should attend the Peace Conference as a representative of Labour as "a sound patriot, an Englishman who does not allow his Socialism or his democratic passion to produce anti-nationalism." What a tragedy—he, the fearless advocate of Socialism for thirty years, recognised and applauded by the *Morning Post*.

Was he a prophet? Max Beer's summary of Hyndman's career (in his *History of Socialism*) I think clearly shows us the real man:—

For all his Marxism and internationalism, he has remained what he was in the 'seventies—a patrician aspiring to the tribunate, a sort of an English Tiberius Gracchus exhibiting the same characteristics as his Roman predecessor, . . . a patriot, burning with zeal to see all his countrymen, the scions of a great race, well fed, well housed, and warlike, having a stake in their world-wide Empire, the boundaries of which they should be prepared to defend and to extend.

* *Hyndman: Prophet of Socialism.* By F. J. Gould (Allen & Unwin, 12/6).

A RED-LETTER WEEK

How we fared at the Brussels Summer School

By CHRISTINE MILLAR

A STRAGGLING band of N.C.L.C.ers, some of them still rather sickish, dragged themselves, many, many hours late, into the Belgian Labour College, ate supper mechanically in sheer exhaustion and trailed off—just a little less dismally—to bed. The North Sea had been unkind. *Very unkind.*

Next morning, wakened by a dazzling sun, we moved up higher on our pillows, curious to see what lay beyond our windows. Some of us had a prospect of lawns and dahlia beds, others of a fruit garden rich in pear and apple trees, and yet others of the college paddock and, beyond it, a row of strangely un-English houses with brightly-painted shutters and geranium bedecked balconies. *This* was the real beginning of the Brussels Summer School, and there was a throb of coming enjoyment in the air.

The College.

Most of us* had had a stroll round the grounds or had lazed within a creeper-framed porch before we foregathered at 8.30 in the bright, cheery refectory. After our meal we made a tour of the three buildings which form the College. The Belgian Labour College has almost everything such a college should have—lecture-rooms with lantern and other equipment, reading-rooms with both comfy and business-like chairs, a well-stocked library, billiard room and recreation room, bedroom accommodation for about forty-five students, a football pitch and tennis courts. In the larger bathrooms are white-tiled "showers"; in the light, spacious kitchen up-to-date dish-washing machinery.

* Not all. It was Sunday morning.—ED.

Promptly at ten we assembled for the opening lecture, but first, the Principal of the College, M. Delsinne, said a few words of welcome to us and expressed his pleasure at having an opportunity of forming closer bonds with the British I.W.C.E. movement. Mme. Blume, a member of the College staff, then gave us "An Outline History of Belgium." This most skilfully-conducted lecture not only re-focused Belgian-British and Belgian-European history for us, but also sharpened our eyes and wits for a more accurate observation and a more intelligent understanding of places, customs, etc., which we were to note in our excursions into other parts of Belgium later.

A Memorable Procession.

The Labour and Socialist International Conference week in Brussels coincided with our Summer School, so we witnessed on Sunday afternoon, what was, for many of us, our first Continental Socialist procession. Little did we know beforehand how valuable a lesson this was going to be. Instead of the higgledy-piggledy shapeless groups we form ourselves into on May Day, with both sexes, all ages and all sizes straggling along anyhow, looking either shamefaced or talking with self-conscious jocularly, we saw a procession that had been *planned*; one that, in consequence, won respect and admiration from its on-lookers and reflected credit on its organisers. Czecho-Slovaks, Hungarians, Swiss, Germans, French, Dutch and Belgians, arranged in uniform groups according to sex and age, and keeping uniform distances, perfect rhythm and sprightly gait, marched past for an hour and three-quarters, with keen, alert faces.

DON'T BE A DOUGLAS DOLITTLE

THE MOVEMENT
WANTS YOUR
HELP.

Another feature that contributed to the impression of oneness of purpose was that some attempt at uniformity in dress had been achieved (at next to no expense), without in any way suggesting militarism or other unpleasant associations. Almost all the children wore white; the boys and youths wore blue beret caps, the girls either



EDO
FIMMEN

AUG. 8. 28 / J.F.H.

beret caps or garlands (except the Rosa Luxembourg group of young girls, who wore something like pink bridal veils); most youths and men, coatless, wore white sports shirts; most women wore a white cotton jumper and skirt and white stockings and white rubber shoes. At regular distances bands—good bands—led the Socialist marching songs; and the happy, vigorous singing suggested that, although capitalism can't be overthrown without hard work, there's no harm in being cheerful while we're on the job. Hundreds and hundreds of red flags, banners of unions and societies, were massed solidly together in the middle section of the procession, and

after them came yet more marching groups. By the time the end of the procession reached us we could see a great field of red flags a mile and a half away, massed in front of the magnificent arch of the Cinquantenaire.

Evening: Before returning "home" we visited the Grand Place (Great Square) which is deservedly famous. As in all old Belgian towns, the Gothic architecture on all four sides of the Grand Place is remarkably beautiful. Our interest in the Town or Common Hall and in the Guild Houses was all the greater because of the morning's lecture.

After supper an informal social made us better known to each other. This was desirable as most of the students were at their first N.C.L.C. Summer School.

The Lectures.

On four forenoons of the remaining five we assembled for a lecture at ten o'clock and afterwards had questions and discussion till 12.30. On Monday we had a lecture on "The Belgian Trade Union and Labour Movements" from M. Buset, who lectures for the Belgian Labour College and is Secretary of the National Committee for Workers' Education in Belgium. After Comrade Buset's lecture there was no need to invite questions, as everyone in the class seemed desirous of taking advantage of the lecturer's knowledge of English by drawing from him every possible item of information on the subject.

On Tuesday the lecturer, Edo Fimmen, Secretary of the International Transport Workers' Federation, kept us in suspense by not appearing at lecture time. So keen was every student, however, to take part in according a rousing welcome to one who has put in such strenuous work for International Trade Unionism that no one moved away from the porch where the lecture was to be held, and when, an hour late, he arrived and accounted creditably for the delay in his arrival, he rewarded us fully for our patience in waiting by giving us a masterly lecture on "The Concentration of Capital and the Trade Union Movement."

So inadequate was the time for questions and discussion that when the lunch bell rang we drew from Fimmen a promise that on the following day, before lecturing on "The International T.U. Movement and the Problem of the Subject Races," he would let us resume the subject of "Concentration of Capital," where we left off. At the conclusion of the lecture on the subject races, Fimmen said it was practically certain that if, in a future European war, the white soldiers were sympathetic to

M. BUSET



Labour and opposed to capitalist authorities, coloured peoples would be introduced as soldiers, policemen, etc.

On Friday M. Buset lectured on "The Belgian Co-operative and Workers' Educational Movements," and in his case also we asked for a continuation of the subject beyond the allotted time.

Excursions.

Each afternoon our study took the form of visits to places of special interest to worker-students. Our first visit was to the Maison du Peuple, the headquarters of the Belgian Labour movement. Here are the offices of the political, the industrial, the

educational and the co-operative sections of the movement. In Belgium the Co-operative movement is Socialist. After the Research Department had shown us something of its work we visited the very large conference halls in the building. On the ground floor is a working-class restaurant where we had tea without tea; that is we sat down at tea time and had coffee or beer like our Belgian comrades.

During our visits to the Palace of Justice and the Cathedral we kept close to the A.U.B.T.W. representative, so as to extract the maximum of information.

Our other excursions included visits to the Congo Museum, Waterloo, the completely re-built town of Louvain, and the Brussels Art Galleries. Of chief interest in the large gallery was the work—sculpture and painting—of Meunier, who chose

for his subjects incidents in the lives of various workers—miners, field-workers, fishermen. The work of the anti-militarist Wiertz, in the Wiertz Gallery, includes, for instance, a picture of Napoleon in hell, confronted by the old folks, women and children bereaved in the war, who accusingly hold out to him the maimed bodies and mangled corpses of those stricken in the wars.

One evening the delegates to the Labour and Socialist International held a garden party in the College grounds and many of us had the temerity to embark on conversations with Chinese, Japanese, Javanese and others in spite of language difficulties.

On Thursday a "chara" trip to Ghent enabled us to visit the Castle of the Counts which has obligingly retained most of its feudal characteristics, the Cathedral with its really wonderful Van Eyck, the Guild-houses on the waterfront and, for contrast, the Ghent Co-operative Headquarters. We paused at the statue of the Belgian who won his country's esteem by taking the "Spinning Jenny" idea from England to Ghent, thus giving rise to the prosperity of Belgium's cotton industry

Modern Belgium.

Some of us chose Antwerp for our final excursion, comparing Antwerp with older Belgian cities, such as Ghent, which claims to have been a stone town when Paris was built of wood. Belgian historians regard Antwerp as a *modern* town, dating from sixteenth century days of trade expansion, when the Scheldt became an important channel of commerce. A twentieth century Congo boat was coaling when we reached the docks and, as we leaned on elbows on the rail at the boat-side, we remembered what Edo Fimmen had told us of the work and aims of the International Transport Federation.

Reflecting here, in our last leisure moments, on the other lectures and conversations and on the further knowledge which we had acquired during our excursions of the geographical and historical factors which explain the Belgium of today, we were more than glad that we had availed ourselves of the opportunities afforded by the Brussels Summer School. The close contact and exchange of views and experiences with Belgian students and

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members of the staff, the opportunity of viewing and acquiring a more intimate and accurate knowledge of places of interest to Socialist students, the chances of applying and testing on the spot the information that the lecturers had given us, the facilities for noting where the Belgian Socialists' problem and difficulties are similar to ours and where and why they are different, to what extent development can be on the same lines, and which racial or geographical or historical factors make parallel development impossible—all these opportunities will certainly made for more sympathetic relationships between ourselves and our Belgian comrades. How soon will it be possible for the N.C.L.C. and the Belgian Labour College movement to arrange for many more exchanges of students and more frequent intercourse by means of Summer Schools or otherwise?

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THE BOOKSHELF

By J. F. HORRABIN

SINCE last month's PLEBS went to press I have been looking at people and places instead of reading books. I started out for the Brussels Summer School with half-a-dozen volumes in the bottom of my suitcase. During the two or three following weeks, spent in Belgium and Germany, I added to these a couple of guide-books and a Tauchnitz or two (I trust if any Customs officer reads the PLEBS he is an I.W.C.E.r first and a Government official afterwards). Also a German pocket dictionary. Also two or three German books which, unless some fierce Esperantist forcibly prevents me, I am going (D.V.) to teach myself to read sometime.

But all the reading I've done in the month amounts to one book: to wit, Bennett's *Riceyman Steps*. You can get it in an admirable little pocket edition (Cassell's) for 3/6, and it's worth the money. I have never read a book written by a bourgeois about working people which, to me anyhow, seemed less snobbish, patronising, or sentimental. You've probably read it, so there's no need for me to attempt to tell its story. But I may be allowed to register the opinion that such senses as that in which Elsie, the maid-of-all-work who is the real heroine of the book, creeps downstairs in the dead of night to eat raw bacon, impelled by a physical hunger which entirely defeats her very keen moral sense, are as unsentimentally realistic (and remember sentimentalism may consist either of over-uglification or over-prettification) as similar episodes in *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*. There is neither prettification nor uglification in *Riceyman Steps*. It is worthy of the author of *Clayhanger* and *The Old Wives' Tale*.

* * *

But if I haven't read much, I've spent quite a lot of time, particularly in Ger-

many, in looking at bookshop windows. And the first thing I was struck by was that the Germans read a good deal more English literature (in translation) than we English read of German. How many living German authors can you name? Feuchtwanger (*Jew Süß*), yes; and Toller. And during the past year or so Mr. Knopf and one or two other publishers have given us English editions of Bruno Frank, Thomas Mann, Neumann, Ludwig and one or two others. But the list is not a long one.

I did not see one single German bookshop that did not "star" in the middle of its window Galsworthy's *Swan Song*, and a little lower—half-a-dozen Edgar Wallaces. Wandering, late in the evening, round the streets of a comparatively small provincial town I found a "Folk Book Shop"—a similar sort of place to our own Reformers' Bookshops: featuring very largely cheap editions of good novels and plays. In the window, in German editions, were Galsworthy, Shaw, Oscar Wilde, Jack London (a big splash), Arnold Bennett, H. G. Wells, Hugh Walpole, Anatole France, Upton Sinclair—hardly a German author among the whole collection in *Riceyman Steps*. It is worthy of the ing seems to be a matter of considerable interest to German proletarians.

* * *

Exactly this same kind of interest is

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manifested, of course, in the great Press Exhibition at Cologne, with its magnificent collections of every sort of book, newspaper, and periodical from every country—including Soviet Russia. (I'm not one of the lucky ones who have been to Russia; so I got a thrill when I saw the Red Flag with the gold hammer and sickle in the corner fluttering in the crescent of flags of every nation fronting the International Section.)

An exceedingly interesting pavilion was that which housed exhibits representing the Socialist and Trade Union press and publishing houses of Germany. Here, in the historical section, were shewn copies of the *Rheinische Year Book*, the *Franco-*

German Year Books and the *Rheinische Zeitung*, all contributed to, or edited by, the young Marx; the original *Communist Manifesto*; Lassalle's papers and pamphlets; and a host of "first copies" of Socialist journals, illustrating the 80-years' history of the movement in Germany. And while one looked at these one glanced over one's shoulder towards the other end of the hall, where a film was being exhibited advertising the Socialist press of to-day and showing something of the machinery of its production and distribution. When our own T.U.C. tackles the job of publicity for the *Daily Herald* in the same spirit and on the same scale as the German workers push their press, the *Herald's* circulation will go up, sure enough.

PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

By H. D. DICKINSON

Here is a plea for the "psychological approach" to the study of social problems. The writer's comments—on Marxism, the M.C.H., etc.—represent, of course, his own individual point of view.

THE scientific study of social organisation is so new that it has scarcely defined its subject matter and has not yet settled on the most fruitful methods of research. Social organisation lies at the meeting point of two sets of events: those usually called physical and those usually called psychological. It is conditioned on the one hand by human physiological needs, by climate, and by the agricultural and industrial technique at the disposal of mankind; on the other hand by the modes of behaviour of the human mind. There are thus two possible lines of approach, exemplified in economics (which is part of social science) by the classical and the modern orthodox schools respectively. While Adam Smith and Ricardo (followed by J. S. Mill and in modern times Cassel) take the commodity as the centre of study, Marshall and Pigou make the consumer (and to a lesser extent the producer) their point of departure.

The M.C.H. is a system of social theory that starts definitely from the physical side of things. It will not be a complete theory of society, however, until it goes on to link up with the psychological. At present it alleges that certain material factors determine, or are reflected in, various laws, religious philosophies, literary tendencies and political movements, without giving an explanation of the mechanism within the human mind that effects this determination or reflection. The great difficulty in the way of giving this explanation is the vagueness and inconsistency of what is called psychology to-day. However, the theories of Freud have been applied (by Freud himself, Rivers, Malinowski and others) with considerable success to the study of primitive social organisation and may in future throw valuable light on the missing link in the sociology of more advanced peoples.

These reflections were prompted by a

book, *The Psychology of Socialism*, by Henry de Man, translated by E. and C. Paul (Allen & Unwin, 16/-). Written by a former member of the Belgian Labour Party, an intellectual who threw himself into the Socialist movement and later became disillusioned, it contains many cutting and well-founded criticisms of Socialism and of the proletariat. Its scarification of proletarian art and literature is not unjust; its criticism of the irrational element in Socialist ideology—Marxian bibliolatry, quasi-religious devotion to symbols, and apocalyptic beliefs—is worth attention; it comments on the tendency of the working-class in the more advanced countries to develop bourgeois standards and prejudices; it points out the powerful psychological allies that the national and monarchic ideas have even in the most class-conscious international Socialist's soul.

As a revelation of the mind of the disgruntled intellectual it is unrivalled, because written with such courage and honesty. As a positive scientific contribution either to psychology or to Socialism, however, the book is valueless. The author's psychology is purely intuitive: although he is capable of moments of insight he has no general ideas to offer. His Socialism is purely sentimental: he rejects Marxism as inadequate, but puts nothing in its place except the necessity of a change of heart. The book lacks coherence and system and is, moreover, far too long.

AN EPIC of MUNICIPALISATION

by J. HAMILTON

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municipality were the separate bodies of Commissioners, such as Lighting, Watching or Paving Commissioners. The Manchester Commissioners, in 1807, pioneered municipal enterprise by making gas "by a municipal staff, in municipal retorts, for municipal use." They followed this up by an unsuccessful attempt to oust a private water company in 1809, but eventually obtained statutory powers to supply water in 1824. The Commissioners have left on record a justification of their policy. This declaration—"It would be contrary to sound policy to entrust the furnishing and control of water, on which the health and comfort of the inhabitants depend, to persons whose sole object will be the promotion of their own interest, and who are induced to the undertaking from no other motive," embodies a fundamental reason for municipal trading as applied to other services as well as water.

This early enterprise of Manchester is, however, exceptional. The country generally had to go through a period of chaotic private enterprise and graft before there

was any real development of municipal trading. Monopolies remained largely unrestricted for a quarter of a century. During this period industries were developing rapidly and demand was growing. Excessive prices were charged and quality, especially as regards water, very inferior. John S. Clarke* informs us that, as adduced before a Parliamentary Committee in 1845, there was "an overwhelming amount of evidence of the impure state of water supplied by the Glasgow Company."

The Royal Commission on the Health of Towns reported in the same year that supplies of water were good in only six of the fifty large towns in the country. It cannot be too strongly stressed that the development of municipal trading has not been determined by the urge to do good but simply as a result of the breakdown of private enterprise to provide essential needs,

essential not only to the general community but also to capitalist development itself.

Beginning with water and gas, and extending to include tramways and electricity, municipal enterprise has nowadays extended to numerous other services. It is remarkable to note that where municipalities have undertaken the above four main services there has not been a single instance of a reversion to private enterprise.

The story of a disease-ridden community's (Glasgow) struggle to obtain powers to supply Loch Katrine water has given Clarke the opportunity of wielding his mordant pen in exposing political graft, capitalist greed, landlord gluttony and financial fraudulency. His booklet is full of propaganda for the forthcoming municipal elections.

* *An Epic of Municipalisation* (Forward Publishing Co., Glasgow, 6d.).

LETTERS

THE GREAT TREK.

DEAR Comrade Editor,—Comrade Fortes is, I believe, away on holiday, so may not be able to reply in time to John S. Clarke's letter last month. I am therefore sending this brief note to clear up one or two points.

1. Prof. Walker's book is published at 12/6, not 2/6.* It is therefore fairly "voluminous"—though one would scarcely have thought of J.S.C. as the sort of person who would (apparently) regard voluminousness as synonymous with reliability.

2. Fortes made it abundantly clear, I should have thought, that "in the history of South Africa the British cut a sorry, not to say contemptible, figure." But it is surely possible to be anti-British without being sentimentally pro-Boer. Fortes, as a South African Socialist in touch with present-day problems, wrote as a *pro-native*. And from that point of view—the only one for an international Socialist—Boer and Briton alike have been robbers and murderers.

Trusting that Clarke will speedily recover from his attack of acute sentimentalism,

I am, Yours frat.,

OLDTIMER

* We apologise. A figure slipped off the end of a line of type—hence the error.—ED.

Comrade Editor,

Having just digested your current issue of *PLEBS*, I wonder if what is stated in the "Maxton-Cook" article, regarding the necessity for complete independence in all sections of the working class movement, is another little dose of that old-time lip-service to well-sounding phrases. I turn now to your "Esperanto Classes," and would like to know if the Labour College "high hied yins," ever heard of an organisation called Sat. or "S.A.T.," really a working class world-wide organisation, who have classes and groups in very many parts of the world. Above all, they have surmounted the old bugbear of orthodox methods in education. I am now speaking of that simple, yet wonderful, little text-book for the students entitled "Petro."

It has struck me and several others as somewhat curious, why the Labour Colleges should appear so unconcerned about the Esperanto Movement, when they think fit to run classes for students on that subject, that they do not take advantage of the services to be had through S.A.T. and that their tutors are permitted to use capitalist-published text-books—also that there exist tutors who are members of what is known as the "Neutral" Esperantist Association, "B.E.A."

The College were active when such counter-movements came to their own door, as in the battle with the W.E.A. The same struggle is now going on in the Esperanto Movement.

Sennaciece Via, P.S.K. 11122.

HOW MANY OF YOUR PALS ARE TAKING

N.C.L.C. CORRESPONDENCE COURSES?

AMONG THE BOOKS

By
"PLEBS" REVIEWERS

ANCIENT Rome at Work, by Paul Louis (Kegan Paul, 16/-) is the bitterest disappointment that I have had for many years. M. Louis—if he is the same writer—is an excellent Socialist, and a good historian of trade unionism, but as an economic historian of Rome—no bong! Messrs. Paul should have returned his MS. to him. It is no more than a disordered mass of inconsequent remarks, held together by the thinnest of threads. And never once is an authority quoted in such a form as to permit of verification. Place this book beside, say, Tenney Frank's *Economic History of Rome* and it is at once exposed.

And yet what a book he might have written. First the small farmers' republic, with its rare slaves as but part of the family and its strong and independent town plebs: then the wrecking of the economic basis of this society by the ravages of the Punic wars: the *latifundia* or huge farms run by huge slave gangs and the growth of a pauperised "lumpen-proletariat" in Rome, dependent on corn-doles and organised in venal gangs for the benefit of various politicians: the flowering of a strange form of capitalism without machinery and dependent on the systematic despoliation of the whole known world: and, finally, the checking and disciplining of a reckless capitalist oligarchy by the dictator Augustus, who restored a basis to Roman society. This stereotyped capitalism gradually decayed and hardened until, with the collapse of the empire hundreds of years later, it passed easily into feudalism.

But it is not from M. Louis that you will learn this.

R.W.P.

* * *

Mr. A. J. W. Keppel writes a very interesting book on *The Theory of the Cost Price System* (Allen & Unwin, 6/-), which expounds a method by which the artificial scarcities of the Trusts would be eliminated without demanding "a radical and far-reaching change in the economic world, such as is involved in Socialism." He carefully explains the value of Labour Power, how surplus-value arises, how the product would automatically cheapen, and how well-being would steadily improve. His contention is that this system "resolves the conflict between Individualists and Socialists?"

Well, does it? The test of all theories is—do they work? In Mr. Keppel's proposals the weakness is that they propose a plan which would have to be consciously applied where up till now changes in Society have resulted from unconscious urges. Much of his proposal would be possible under

the conscious control of economic forces, which is Socialism. But capitalists are not the creators of their system, cannot control it, and cannot save it even by adopting a "cost-price system." A.W.

* * *

To survey the development of this branch of study from Aristotle to the modern experimental school, is a tall order. Mr. R. J. Warden, in *An Outline of Comparative Psychology* (Kegan Paul, 2/6) has performed his task in an interesting

TRUTH IN STRANGE PLACES

"The Northern Capitalists no more went to war with the South to free the slaves than they went to war with Germany to save European liberty or to avenge Belgium. In the first case, they desired that the South should be taxed in order to build up their manufactures through tariffs, and for this reason they barred secession. In the second case, they feared that a German victory would make the great sums which they had advanced to the Entente Powers irrecoverable. In the one case, the sympathy of the Northern Churches with the slave, in the other the popular indignation against German atrocities was utilized; but in both cases the motives influencing the financiers were pecuniary."

[THE CHURCH TIMES (July 20/28)
reviewing books on U.S.A.]

manner for the general reader as well as the more critical student.

The point in the evolutionary process from amoeba to man at which the psychic factor enters the field of behaviour, where it comes from, whether there is such a factor, are questions to which priest, philosopher, scientist and the plain common man, have attempted answers. The author has something to say about all of them, sufficient to stimulate the Marxist to a closer study of the subject, which should lead generally to a clearer understanding of the standpoints of vitalist, behaviourist and mechanist, and their relationships to Socialist philosophy.

Controversy still rages around the relation of the physiological to instinct, intelligence and intellect, of the reflex to the complex. Any work that will assist the worker student to an understanding of the controversy is welcome (to workers) especially of handy size and low price. Such is the work under review.

J.A.B

* * *

Mr. H. A. Silverman, the author of *The Economics of Social Problems* (University Tutorial Press, 5/6) is a lecturer at Birmingham University and a W.E.A. lecturer. His work is an excellent sample of W.E.A. thinking.

It purports to deal with the economics of the more urgent social problems, and typifies the

W.E.A. point of view in so far as it deals with their own peculiar causes. To regard the capitalist system as the basic cause of all these problems would be anathema to the mind of the professor who can dismiss the miners' difficulties with such a casual footnote as "The hours of miners and other workers have increased to some extent since 1925." Really?

While this book contains some useful collections of statistics, it is very dear at the price. N.E.

* * *

Je Servo de la Profesoro, ne la Proletaro, An International Language, by Otto Jespersen (Allen and Unwin, 4/6). *Is an International Language Possible?* by E. Sylvia Pankhurst (6d.). Dissatisfied with previous projects, Prof. Jespersen here works out his own particular proposal. So Novial will figure in the long list of theoretically perfect plans on paper for an inter-language to be examined and rejected later by the next professor with time to spare. Prof. Peano's predominantly Latin Interlingua has in Miss Pankhurst at least one enthusiastic supporter in England. The affected neutrality of her *Delphos* is happily now abandoned, but her mistakes, misspellings and ignorance of what is for practical purposes the international language, i.e., Esperanto, still persist. M.S.

* * *

Studies in Magnets and Magnetism. By R. Wild (Stockwell 2s. 6d.).

This book is of psychological interest only. The author, presumably in his old age, has decided for himself that magnetism is the solution of all problems. His arguments and grammar lack cogency and that is really the kindest observation that can be made about the book. It is full of phrases of this sort! "It would appear that light from friction is equivalent to electric light with a difference." "Magnetism is the source of light. Magnetism is the source of heat. Magnetism is the source of fire." "Gravity." "This is a part of the subject that is still a mystery. Now perhaps a few thoughts might enable some master mind to unravel the problem."

Unfortunately, the thoughts that follow are exceedingly few, and far from masterly!

J.G.C.

* * *

German Conditions and "Rationalisation." *The Report on Economic and Financial Conditions in Germany*, issued recently by H.M. Stationery Office (3/6 net) provides valuable reading for all those interested in tendencies towards "rationalisation of industry." Trustification has often the direction of intensification in order to compete more effectively. Rationalisation is the realisation by Capitalists that industries cannot go on for ever developing and that the post-war expansions of plant were too extensive for normal market possibilities.

"The advantages to the industry now lie principally in an equilibrium of manufacturing and

selling conditions, which encourages expansion by eliminating those risks of price fluctuation which either stagnate trade or cause it to develop in speculative cycles, disturbing to manufacturer and labour alike."

While this elimination of overlapping and "cutting the suit according to the cloth" is easier in a tariff island like Germany, it is nevertheless the inevitable tendency of Capitalism. That it can never be successful due to Capitalist contradictions, but there is little doubt that it indicates what will be effected under Socialism where all industry will be "rationalised"

Much valuable information is given regarding wages and working conditions in Germany. Every student should endeavour to read this report.

A.W.

HELL

GREEK legend said that Prometheus was nailed down to a rock in the Caucasus where his liver was ceaselessly torn by vultures, and he could not die. This torment he suffered because the gods were angry at his having given men the gift of fire. Prometheus stretched helpless out as the victim of sun, of cold, and of birds of prey on the mountainside is an emblem of a torment which human ingenuity cannot surpass. Yet to-day French capitalism inflicts torments almost as great upon those, chiefly members of the working class, who break its criminal laws.

Mrs. Blair Niles, an American woman, has cast her investigations into Devil's Island into the form of a novel (*Condemned to Devil's Island*, Cape, 10/6), but we are assured the details are exact, and indeed they bear the stamp of truth upon them. To prisoners who are underfed, the alternations of tropical rain and tropical sun, in their narrow cells, are torments whose terror is expressed in the colossal figures of mortality, which French officialdom accepts with a calm shamelessness all its own. Mrs. Niles' story spares us nothing—neither the enforced homosexuality nor the horrible device to which the convicts are forced to conceal their small stocks of money.

Her story of Michel's attempted escape through the jungle is magnificently exciting. Despite some irritating tricks of style, she is able to suggest the dark river and the unpathed jungle as skilfully as the barren rocks of Devil's Island.

Among the prisoners, she notes, is one named Roussenq, who has continually and for years defied his warders. So far from fearing punishment, he seeks it: he defies regulations and rules for the mere pleasure of rebellion and receives the consequent ill-treatment with indifference. His time—eighteen years now—has been spent in the composition of a long poem on imprisonment. Its title is *Hell*.

Put this book on your Free Library list.

R.W.P.

THE MECHANICAL WORKER

WHAT is organised labor doing," writes Esther Lowell in the *Labor Age* (N.Y.), "to adjust itself to the technological revolution which is sweeping through industry to-day? Are trade unionists studying the problem of their displacement by more and more automatic processes? Whole groups of skilled workers, on whose craft control the American Federation of Labor was based, are now being wiped out. Industry is spending millions to hasten the change. What must intelligent workers do?"

"To-day 67 workers do the work 100 did just twenty-five years ago. This is a general average found by the National Industrial Conference Board, a research agency maintained by the biggest corporations of the United States.

"More specific facts are found in *Power Magazine* for August 9th, 1927. Figures gathered by Arthur Huntington for Iowa State Board of Education contrast the daily output per worker in 1890 with that of 1927 in various industries:—

| | 1890 | 1927 |
|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Coal | $\frac{1}{2}$ ton | 4 tons |
| Lumber ... | 100 square feet | 750 square feet |
| Shoes | $\frac{1}{2}$ pair | 10 pairs |
| Paper | 20 square feet | 20,000 square feet |
| Glass | 55 square feet | 3,000 square feet |
| Nails | 5 pounds | 500 pounds |

CIGARETTES—NOW AND THEN.

"Anyone in New York City can easily see the change for himself in one industry—cigarette making. Down in the East Side on Avenue B, near Tomkins Square, there is a tiny dark shop where a worker labors frantically fast poking bits of tobacco into little paper tubes. Slowly the pile of finished smokes accumulates.

"Up on the Great White Way of Broadway is a 'Lucky Strike' demonstration shop. Shiny machines grind away during the hours the theatrical crowds are thickest. At one end is the hopper of shredded tobacco which drops the material down on rollers. At the other end comes out the finished package of cigarettes ready to be gathered in dozen lots for further packing. The machine rolls the cigarette, seals it, drops the right number into the tinfoil and label cover it has folded together, seals the package with a revenue stamp, puts waxed paper around it, and there you are! Now quickly the packages accumulate and are taken away by one of the workers. Of course the number kept at the demonstration is larger than the number of workers handling the machines in the real factories, but even then the difference between the 'Lucky Strike' production and the Avenue B shop is startling.

GOOD-BYE GLASS BLOWERS.

"Another industry where technology is eliminating most of the workers is sheet glass. By the

Coburn process the liquid glass is forced out in a long ribbon, smooth and shining and ready to be cut, packed and shipped. The old glass blower who used to blow the hot liquid into long cylinders which had to be laid out and cut, flattened again, and polished, is gone for ever from a modern glass plant. Henry Ford is making plate glass for his new Model A cars by a somewhat similar process, pushing the glass out of the furnace in sheets ready for cutting and polishing."

I.W.C.E. IN QUEENSLAND

WE have received a letter from E. Ellis, Secretary of the Queensland Plebs League, from which we have extracted the following particulars.

Until about 1926, workers' education in Queensland was in the hands of the W.E.A., which unlike the W.E.A. on this side, provided education which, in some respects, could have been described as independent working-class education.

In 1925, however, one of the tutors was rash enough to speak in support of a railway strike and following upon that the W.E.A. took steps to purge itself from that sort of wickedness.

In the ensuing struggle quite a number of the branches supported the working-class point of view, but it was found that the Government grants and University's influence had the power to dictate the tune which the Queensland W.E.A. was to provide. In consequence of that, steps had to be taken to form the Queensland Plebs League and following upon that the Labour College.

We are pleased to say that this College is to be controlled by the Trade Union Movement and that neither the Government nor the University is to be allowed to interfere.

THE PLEBS

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—is published for the National Council of Labour Colleges, Swinton House, 324 Gray's Inn Rd., London, W.C.1.

P's and Q's

The N.C.L.C. Head Office received the following cryptic note some time ago: "Mr. — has gone on a six months' sea voyage and is unable to keep it up." As it is a sea voyage "unable to keep it down" would seem to be more appropriate.

* * *

Clubs and classes will not be completely equipped for Esperanto study unless they possess *La Plena Vortaro* (7/- S.A.T.) an Esperanto-*Esperanto* dictionary now in its last stages of preparation. A reduction in price (three copies for price of two) can be secured by prepayment, and individual students will find it worth while to save up and co-operate to secure this 500 pp. standard work.

MODERATE MEN

Counsel's explanation in the Carlton Club case that what the committee wanted was to attract "moderate men" into the club brings to mind a highly characteristic saying of Dizzy's. When he became Premier Sir William Rose said to him, "I am going, if I may venture to do so, to give you a piece of advice; when you fill up bishoprics take care to appoint moderate men."

"'Moderate men?'" repeated Dizzy thoughtfully, "'moderate men'? Ah, yes, now I understand what you mean—men without convictions."

—Manchester Guardian.

A Liverpool comrade, interested in Ellen Wilkinson's recent article in *The PLEBS* on "The Office Robot," sends us a copy of *Progress*, Messrs. Lever Bros.' "house" magazine, containing an article on "The Machine in the Office." "Every year, every week, indeed," says the writer, "the machine enters more and more into the traffic of the office. . . Invention has followed invention until, in offices like Lever Bros., machines are doing every variety of calculating and book-keeping, compiling statistics and revealing facts about sales, the making and movement of commodities, accounts, and the myriad transactions of a huge manufacturing business."

Multiply 9,584 x 564. It will take you hardly less than 20 seconds. A trained girl fingering the keyboard of a calculating machine can do the sum in less than 5 seconds. . .

So, chants the writer enthusiastically, while a junior does the work of a senior in a fraction of the time, the senior is left free "to apply himself to the higher functions of supervision and investigation. . . . And sometimes he has to do the "investigating" at the Labour Exchange. But Lever Bros.' scribe does not mention that.

CAPITALIST EFFICIENCY.

"Maybe you think I'm getting kind of woozy about it," I tell 'em, "but to me the beauties of modern filing-systems, which enable a man to instantly and without the least loss of time or effort find a letter on which, perhaps, depends the closing of an important deal, is in its practical way, to say nothing of the physical appearance of modern up-to-date filing—cabinets, no longer mere wooden boxes, but whether in steel or fireproofed wood, the finest example of the cabinet-maker's art and imitating perfectly the rarest woods—To me," I often tell them, "these filing-systems are in every way as beautiful as the poet's song, as the flush on the maiden's cheek when she first hears the first whispered words of love, or the soft chirp of the mother bird at eveningtide, chirping to her birdlings. Yes, sir, you bet your sweet life they are, and you can laugh all you want to!"

(From Sinclair Lewis's *The Man Who Knew Coolidge*).

HERE'S ENTERPRISE

Heartiest congratulations to the Manchester Plebs League and N.C.L.C. Students' Association on its enterprise in printing and publishing a monthly "Bulletin," which, it is hoped, will develop into "a regular prooaganda and publicity sheet for the Labour College movement in Manchester and S.E. Lancs. Particulars of lectures and other fixtures are given in pithy paragraphs, as well as appeals on behalf of *THE PLEBS* and news of local activities. Good luck to the venture!

FOR SCOTLAND

Will the voluntary tutors in Scotland and those who wish to become voluntary tutors please send in their names and addresses *immediately* to A. Woodburn, Scottish Secretary, 1 Viewforth, Edinburgh, to enable him to compile the

SCOTTISH ROLL OF TUTORS?

WHAT'S DOING

The N.C.L.C. at Work

BY now the circulars giving particulars of our winter classes and asking for local affiliations should have been issued. Colleges will have sent special circulars to the unions with N.C.L.C. schemes and will be providing as many speakers as possible for the branches. Some of the Divisions lost ground last year. Now is the time to wipe out the stains on their escutcheons. Steps will no doubt be taken to see that both *The Plebs* and *Plebs* text-books are on sale at all the classes and that the tutors make a special point of saying something to the classes on the importance of buying and reading our literature and of bringing the other fellow or girl to the classes. Education can be a great weapon in the class struggle, but like other weapons it will rust if it is not used.

WHAT THE DIVISIONS ARE DOING.

NEW AFFILIATIONS: The following new affiliations were obtained in August by local Colleges. London, 2; Liverpool, 1; Ipswich, 1.

DIVISION 1.

Tilmanstone Branch of the Kent Mine Workers' Association has now affiliated to this Division and it is hoped to run a class in this district during the coming winter. Mark Starr conducted a day school on September 2nd at Sheerness on Esperanto and Rationalisation with good results. The school agreed to set up a Provisional Council for Kent and arrange a conference for October 6th or 7th. Chatham D.L.P. has fixed up a series of monthly lectures with the Division, the organiser commencing in September. About seven classes have been fixed up under the joint auspices of the Divisional Council and the London Co-operative Societies and a few more are expected. A number of affiliated bodies are now ordering a regular supply of *The Plebs* for their members. One of the students of our Southall class has gained the A.U.B.T.W. Scholarship to the Labour College, London. Lectures on "Rationalisation" are in great demand at Trade Union branches in London as is a lecture on "Tricks of Financiers." In October separate conferences will be held for the purpose of pushing the women's organisations and the Students' Association. The London N.C.L.C. Tutors' Council will meet on September 21st to discuss the questions of making our classes more effective. There are still a few vacancies for the week-end school at "Treetops," near Guildford, on September 22nd and 23rd. Lecturer, J. F. Horrabin, on "Empire Problems." Charge, 10s. inclusive.

DIVISION 3.

The Div. Conference at the end of July enjoyed the lecture of the General Secretary on "The Work of the N.C.L.C." Com. Bright was re-nominated to serve as the College representative on the Div. E.C. Six classes have already been arranged for

the autumn session. George Hicks is helping St. Albans to lead off by means of a Conference on September 22, to be followed by a Day School next day. Peterborough, High Wycombe, Southend are also holding Schools on September 9 and 16. Division 1 is being helped by a visit to Sheerness on September 1. Visits to Ipswich (September 4), to Colchester A.E.U (September 1), to Staines (August 31) have been made. Any class which has not accepted the class arrangements suggested should write at once to the Organiser.

DIVISION 4.

Brilliant sunshine and a marked spirit of comradeship contributed to the success of the Divisional Camp School at Rhoose, near Barry, August 4th to 11th. The subject of the lectures and discussions throughout the week were: "Place of the N.C.L.C. in the Working Class Movement," "Theory and Practice of the British Working Class Movement," "Leninism," "International Working Class Organisation," "Marxism and Modern Problems," "Economics of the Mining Industry," "Marxian Theory" and "Rationalisation." The lecturers and leaders of discussion were the Organiser and Comrades Councillor D. Lewis (Treorchy), Younie, Trevor David, Nun Nicholas, Ness Edwards and P. Thomas. The sports side of the school was not neglected and bathing was a prominent feature. On sports day *Ystalyfera* carried off the principal prizes. Various rambles were enjoyed, enlivened by the Rhoose band, conducted by Councillor Thomas. The Divisional E.C. has agreed to issue camp contribution cards for the 1929 school.

DIVISION 5.

The many friends of Comrade L. Heaven, of Bristol, who was at the Training Centre, London, in 1927, will be sorry to hear of his tragic death through a motor cycle accident. Comrade Heaven was an active worker in the movement, and by his death Bristol College has sustained a deep loss. A Day School was held in Bristol on 15th August with Comrade Jagger as speaker. Two good lectures were given and an interesting discussion followed. Two out of the three scholarships offered by the T.U.C. to the London Labour College were won in Division 5. Comrade Game-son, secretary of Newton Abbot L.C., secured one. We offer both winners our congratulations. Following a visit of the Organiser to Longdowns, Cornwall, members of the A.U.B.T.W. decided to form a Study Group for that district. Swindon L.C. is calling a conference for September 9th for the purpose of reviving the classes in that area.

DIVISION 7.

August is always a quiet month in this Division. Sunday, August 12, saw a gathering of sixty comrades drawn from Doncaster, Bentley, Wath and

Rotherham at a Day School held at Wentbridge. The Organiser took the lectures. None of the participants will forget the ramble amongst the steep crags. So tall and heavy was the vegetation and so impassable were the rocks that the rambles had to be rescued by the Wath contingent of miners, who formed a towing chain up the crags. The Organiser reached home at 3 a.m.! The Leeds College held their third annual Day School on Sunday, August 26th, at the Otley Clarion Camp. Bad weather conditions spoilt the attendance, but about seventy delegates and visitors enjoyed the lectures, given by Mrs. C. Hill, upon "Nicaragua" and by A. Haigh upon "Language as a Propaganda Weapon." The Week-end School at Heathmount Hall on September 15th and 16th, with Comrade J. P. M. Millar, will be better attended than that of the previous years. This will be the last of the Divisional Summer Schools. Arrangements are well in hand for starting the winter's work, with the exception of a few classes, in early October.

DIVISION 8.

S.E. LANCS.—Wm. Paul was the lecturer on September 2nd at our Altrincham Day School, which seventy students and friends attended. In addition to two lectures Comrade Paul sang rebel songs—as only Paul can. Under the auspices of the Eccles Trades and Labour Council we have arranged a Day School for Sunday, October 14th at the Trades Hall, Trafford Road, Eccles. J. A. Brewin will be the lecturer.

N. LANCS. AREA.—A new and welcome affiliation is that of the Clitheroe Labour Party. Fourteen classes have been arranged up to Christmas and class lists have been distributed to all Labour organisations throughout the area. Misses F. Whittam and A. Bracewell, together with T. Dewhurst, are new additions to the tutorial staff and we feel sure success will attend their efforts. We regret that two good Burnley supporters, Comrades Holt and Sullivan, have been compelled to leave the district. It is anticipated that the Delegate Conference, to be held in Blackburn on September 22nd, will give a fillip to the Winter Session.

LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT.—Arrangements have been made for J. S. Clarke (Glasgow) to give a series of his well-known lantern lectures as follows: "Beechcroft," Birkenhead, September 28th, and Picton Hall, Liverpool, September 30th.

EDUCATION, in 1928, as in the time of the Romans, may make a man a more valuable slave, but it is no substitute for freedom.

A. MARSHALL DISTON,
Socialist Review, July, 1928.

To Parcel Agents
Credit for unsold copies of PLEBS can only be allowed if the claim is made within two months of the date of issue.

It is hoped to arrange also for September 29th. Full particulars from the organiser. The usual classes will be held in Liverpool, Birkenhead, Moreton, Bootle, Newton, St. Helens, Warrington and Wigan districts. The Warrington Co-op. Society, Education Committee, has affiliated. The loss of the services of Professor Johnstone will be keenly felt by the many students who have regularly attended his classes for many years. All wish him a speedy recovery to health. We welcome the help of the following new voluntary tutors: Comrades W. J. Paul, J. S. Blackburn, V. Meek (N.U.D.A.W.), and Mrs. A. Shipman.

DIVISION 10.

The Scottish National Committee are taking energetic and effective steps to bring into being the reorganisation scheme required in Scotland. In Edinburgh and the South-East of Scotland the scheme is already in force. By the time this note is printed a full-time organiser will have been appointed for the Glasgow and West of Scotland district, the secretary (pro tem.) of which is R. E. Scouller. This district is holding a special conference in the Central Halls, Bath Street, Glasgow, on Saturday, 6th October, at 3 p.m. The secretary will be glad to hear of bodies (accepting the policy of the Scottish Labour College National Committee), who wish to be represented and to have names to add to the already considerable roll of voluntary tutors. Tutors are also required in Fife, Perth, Dundee, and Lanarkshire. Will former and new tutors kindly send in their names and addresses immediately to A. Woodburn, 1 Viewforth, Edinburgh. Last year, Scotland's figures showed a substantial decrease. We mean to wipe out that "record."

DIVISION 12.

Mansfield and Nottingham Colleges have held their meetings to arrange classes for the Autumn Session. There is every prospect of an extension of the movement in both areas. The disturbing factor in the Mansfield area is the long-continued and increasing depression in the mining industry. College finance is adversely affected by this depression. The College movement in Nottingham reaches out from the city further each year; Kimberley and Hucknall are to have classes during the autumn. The influence of the classes is felt in many a Trade Union branch room and in Labour Party meetings, and in discussions at Conference, all over the district. The Colleges in the rest of the Division are all making their arrangements for the coming session.

OIL



Is one of the principal motive forces of modern capitalism—it provides power and lubrication. Sound ideas are themselves a powerful motive force in the modern Labour Movement. Add to your driving power by taking some of the following

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Do. (Advanced)

Local Government

Members of the following Unions can, under their Education Schemes, have Correspondence Courses FREE, just as they may attend N.C.L.C. classes without charge.

Others pay a small fee.

Amalgamated Engineering Union
Amalgamated Society of Dyers
Amalgamated Union of Building Trade
Workers

Amalgamated Union of Upholsterers
Bury and District Textile Warehousemen
Electrical Trades' Union

Managers' and Overlookers' Society
Military Musical Instrument Makers' Union
National Union of Distributive and Allied
Workers

National Union of Sheet Metal Workers

National Union of Corporation Worker
National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades'
Association

National Association of Plasterers
National Union of Shop Assistants
National Union of Textile Workers
Nelson Weavers' Union

Padiham Weavers' Association
Scottish Union of Bakers and Confectioners
Scottish Painters' Society
Tailors' and Garment Workers' Trade
Union

Applications for free courses must be accompanied by Union Card.

Write to J. P. M. MILLAR, Gen. Sec., National Council of Labour Colleges, 324 Gray's
Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

HAVE YOU EVER STOPPED TO THINK?



—that your efficiency in the Labour Movement depends upon the extent, *and kind*, of your education?

Education, in the ordinary (capitalist) sense, doesn't fill the bill. Class-conscious workers want education in the Social Sciences—the sciences which treat of the basic principles on which the Labour Movement is built.

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