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ORGAN OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
LABOUR COLLEGES

THE PEEBS

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MARCH, 1929 ✓

Special Articles

by

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CONTENTS

	PAGE		PAGE
IT'S THE DAILY DOPE THAT DOES IT	By J.F.H. 49	"UNDERGOING" OUR CORRESPONDENCE COURSES	
DOPE DISTRIBUTORS :—		By CHRISTINE MILLAR	63
I THE FILMS	By "BENN" 51	IN MEMORIAM	65
II THE THEATRES	By MAURICE DOBB 53	THE B.B.C. AND BIAS	
III THE WIRELESS	By ELLEN WILKINSON, M.P. 56	By J. P. M. MILLAR	65
IV THE PRESS	By C. R. DE GRUCHY 58	THE BOOKSHELF	
THE BEGINNING OF CIVILISATION	By H. N. BRAILSFORD 61	By J. F. HORRABIN	66
		AMONG THE BOOKS	
		By "PLEBS" REVIEWERS	68
		WHAT THE N.C.L.C. IS DOING	71

IT'S THE DAILY DOPE THAT DOES IT

ONE of the first tasks of Independent Working-Class Educationists, as has often been remarked, is to help worker-students to *unlearn* certain things. Our biggest difficulty, perhaps, is not that the workers are *uneducated*, but that they have been *miseducated*. Capitalism could not go on, were this not so. For, after all, Capitalism's surest defence is the tacit acceptance of "things as they are" by great masses of the people whom it condemns to economic bondage. And Capitalism takes care, accordingly, by every means in its power, to teach contentment with things as they are to its wage-slaves—to get the 'dope' across!

The Power of Suggestion

Now this highly important process of mis-education is not merely carried on in schools. It is, of course, begun there. But even more important from the capitalist point of view—and therefore from our point of view, also, as enemies of capitalism—are those various agencies by which the 'right' kind of ideas are *suggested* to the workers, day in, day out, throughout the whole of their lives. After all, most people's memories are short; and the education provided in elementary schools—except maybe for ABC and the Rule of Three—is apt to fade out fairly quickly. Moreover, the human adult is apt to be suspicious, even resentful, of attempts to

teach him 'for his good.' So Capitalism has been astute enough to cover up the 'teaching' with plenty of jam, and by means of sensational newspapers, 'romantic' plays and films, or 'bright' broadcasting, to keep on instilling the fundamental virtues of Docility, Acceptance, Torpor, in the minds of its millions of victims.

'Dope' Distributors

It is precisely these 'virtues,' these ideas—absorbed unconsciously—which are the biggest obstacle to the working-class educationist whose aim is to rouse his fellows to a consciousness of their real status in society. That is why we have devoted the greater part of our space in *The PLEBS* this month to a series of special studies, by various writers, of four of Capitalism's great engines of propaganda—the Press, the Wireless, the Cinema, and the Theatre. Three of these—Press, Theatre and Cinema—are, of course, big industries, run by individual capitalists, or groups of capitalists, for profit. The fourth—Broadcasting—is in Britain nominally a Government monopoly; but that fact makes no difference whatever to its value or efficiency as a capitalist propaganda machine.

Money Power and Ideas

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study these methods of propaganda, in order to counteract them. Remember, in the vast majority of cases, *they represent the only 'educational' influences in the lives of adult workers.* These are the agencies which are forming our fellow-workers' minds. And remember, too, that the deadliest part of the poison does not consist in the definite inculcation of certain ideas; *but in taking those ideas for granted, in going on, day after day, year after year, assuming that certain facts of society cannot be questioned, and in avoiding all mention of inconvenient facts or questionings.* This is a Censorship far more complete, and far more dangerous from the workers' point of view, than that which forbids the presentation of this or that film, or this or that play. It is a Censorship, based on Money Power, which is all along deciding—in newspapers, plays, novels, films and wireless—what is desirable (from the point of view of Money Power) for the workers to see, hear, or know.

Our task, as I.W.C.Ers, is to break down all such barriers to full knowledge on the part of our fellows; and to open their eyes to the means by which they have been chloroformed.

J. F. H.

DOPE DISTRIBUTORS. I:—

THE FILMS

By "BENN"

(of the *New Leader*)

"THERE'S 150,000,000 FEET OF THIS FILM, SO IT MUST BE GOOD!"

IT was the Beaverbrook Press that first started the mean, filthy attacks on *The Well of Loneliness*. It was the Beaverbrook Press (same instructions, different office-boy) that led the yelping, illiterate snarl against Pudowkin's magnificent film *The End of St. Petersburg*.

St. Petersburg, which is universally acclaimed by film directors and discerning critics as a work which will revolutionise film production standards, was characterised as a piece of "screen hysteria, with a broad streak of insanity running through it." Whereas films like *Huntingtower* and *The Red Dancer of Moscow*, with their innuendos, sneers and insinuations against Russia, are regarded as being quite in order; and such an unintelligent, supremely ordinary work as *Piccadilly* is hailed by this Beaverbrook journalist as "fascinating, thrilling, stupendous—one of the world's greatest films."

Leaving aside for a moment the possible effects of such hysterical pronouncements (biassed judgments that are not worth replying to here) one seeks for the reason for these periodical attacks on films like *Mother*, *Potemkin*, *Storm over Asia* and *End of St. Petersburg*, films which, after all, stand head and shoulders above anything that has yet been turned out by Hollywood, Neubabelsburg or Elstree.

Whatever else one may think about the Beaverbrook Press, one thing is certain—it is always attuned to the requirements of the more intelligent, go-ahead section of the capitalist class of this country. This can be seen by its advocacy of trade with Russia at a time when all other Conservative, and even some Liberal, newspapers would not hear of trade with the Bolsheviks under any consideration.

Why the Yelping?

So one is usually safe in assuming that when this section of the Press boosts there is some very good reason for boosting; and when it yelps there is some very good cause for yelping. And, undoubtedly, from the capitalist point of view, there was very good reason for yelping over *The End of St. Petersburg*—and very good reason for suppressing it. For this film, because of its philosophic viewpoint and its technical methods, was as great a piece of Socialist propaganda as Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*. Perhaps even greater.

Now let us have some plain talking about the Cinema, and about the Socialist movement. The Socialist movement has neglected the cinema; more, it has persistently adopted an attitude of aloofness towards it. Sneered at it. Regarded it as food for bored women, even for half-wits. "And if we go to the pictures, what do we see? Sentimental trash and foolish drivel." And the super-intelligent Socialist buries himself more deeply than ever in Marx and Muller-Lyer, or takes himself off to listen to Shaw or Toller.

I must say some very hard things about this attitude. The average Socialist is much less intelligent and much less class-conscious than the Rothermeres and the Beaverbrooks. They, too, are aware that the majority of films turned out by mass-production methods are vicious, puerile things, but they are aware, also, that the film is the greatest and most potent weapon of propaganda and instruction

that has ever been fashioned. So while we run down the cinema, they get busy boosting it and controlling it and using it for all they are worth. The cinema serves their ends more efficiently than any other propagandist machine.

The Appeal of the Film

And this is so by very reason of certain axioms that will be agreed on by everyone. A film is a series of moving pictures. A continuous flow of images. A never-halting stream of rhythmically-moving pictorial symbols. Resulting in an overwhelming assault on the senses and the emotions, the more susceptible portion of man's mental make-up. It may be unfortunate that *Capital* or *Empirio-Criticism* is difficult of assimilation and, in the case of the man-in-the-street, impossible of comprehension—but it is a fact. And as hard-bitten, practical, level-headed individuals we should recognise it as a fact. No use grumbling about it; much better to recognise the fact and its implications.

The average man is not interested in text books on economics or articles on philosophy. The average man is not a rational animal (are any of us?) but is moved primarily by his inhibitions and emotions. We, with all our study of psychology, only realise this very dimly; the Press lords train all their guns, and the circulations of their newspapers are largely founded on the results of this, on man's emotional side. They give him scare headlines, flaring placards, sexy pictures—they don't reason or argue, they just hit the reader over the head. And it works.

If this is true so far as the printed word is concerned (and he who runs may not read a newspaper), how much truer would it be if a newspaper were just a series of pictures—he who runs *may* read a series of pictures. He who runs has very little time to reason; all he can do is just gulp down the mental food that is offered him. And this food must not be indigestible.

Propaganda Possibilities

Now a film may be compared to a newspaper, or rather an article or story in a newspaper, told entirely in pictures. Stated

thus, consider the enormous propaganda possibilities of the cinema. Possibilities much greater than those possessed by any newspaper or any group of newspapers. And these propaganda possibilities are utilised to the fullest extent in the interests of capitalism.

Here is the reason for the sensation over *The End of St. Petersburg*. For *St. Petersburg* was the Socialist reply to the all-the-year-round propaganda of capitalist ideas in the cinema. Pudowkin's film broke every rule of ordinary film notions. It showed a pregnant woman, it had an uncouth peasant as central character, the employer was the villain of the piece, it dared to say that soldiers actually used bayonets to kill, and, in short, was quite a disgusting film. And *Storm over Asia* is even worse; it actually has a Mongol as the leading figure! So, naturally, the Press which jumped on a relatively harmless book like *The Well of Loneliness* was not going to sit idly by while a bombshell like *The End of St. Petersburg* was being shown, even to the afternoon tea-party members of the Film Society.

This is the attitude of the most class-conscious section of the capitalist class towards a Socialist propaganda film. They recognise how harmful it would be to them if such films as this were generally shown, and so they leave no stone unturned to prevent it from being released. We, on the other hand, in our pristine superciliousness sneer at films and regard them as playthings, a pastime for infants.

While we have one or two or three Socialist films, and these films that are not generally shown, the employing class has thousands of such films and bombards the workers with them every day and all day, in every city and town and village throughout the world. The film in which every Chinaman is a villain and every Englishman in the garden is lovely will be seen by you to-day and by French, German, Italian, Austrian and Chinese workers to-morrow. The dominion of the film is boundless. Capitalist propaganda through the film is limitless.

You think I overestimate the power of the movies? When you realise that the film industry is the third or fourth largest in-

dustry in the United States you will probably think that I err on the side of underestimation of the potentialities of the Film.

The owners get their dope over in super-production and in programme pictures, in topicals and in shorts. In a super-production, such for example as *Piccadilly*, the propaganda is subtle. The characters are just sketched in; the English men and women appear weak and rather futile, but really decent and moral at heart. On the other hand, the Chinese characters are hard; they unite to rob the Englishman, the Chinese girl seduces him (he was only a poor, weak night-club proprietor) and the Chinese lad murders his own sweetheart. Note the propaganda; all done very gently, but very effectively.

And the dope in programme pictures. Well, you remember *The Tempest*; you remember the dirty Bolsh who never had a wash or a shave, but went about stirring up revolt against the handsome clean officer. And you remember that other film where one sub-title told us how "A few insignificant persons meet to decide the fate of Russia." The propaganda is more blatant and more

open, but gets home quite well with less discriminating audiences.

Safe "Topics"

Then last, and perhaps worst, the topical budgets. All we have here is Royalty and military manoeuvres and naval tournaments and air force flights. A continuous propaganda of Jingoism and flag-wagging. In the topicals, for example, the trouble at Nine Mile Point is referred to as "a storm in a teacup," and polished off very quickly, while the removal of the King to Bognor is filmed from almost every point on the route and forms practically the whole of the topical budget. By astute sub-titling and clever editing, the dope gets over once again.

Let us recognise the power of the films. Power for harm and power for good. We must not ignore them. They are probably the most powerful weapon the capitalist class possesses, and our attack on the schools, the press, the pulpit and the stage as instruments of the dominant class must be supplemented by an onslaught on the cinema in its character of instrument for maintaining class supremacy.

DOPE DISTRIBUTORS. II:—

THE THEATRES

By MAURICE DOBB

THE stage, playing as it does both upon the eye and the ear, is probably surpassed only by the cinema in its power to arouse our emotions and galvanise them into a new form. The more successful it is in stirring us in this way, deep down, and in giving a new pattern, as it were, to our emotions, enabling them to find more ordered and effective expression in the future, the higher is its value as art. And the "twist" or direction that tends to be given to the emotions in the stirring process represents the relation of this art to ideology



"WALK UP! WALK UP!! & LEAVE YOUR BRAINS OUTSIDE!"

—its social *tendency*, or, as one might crudely put it, its "propagandist value."

Usually the great periods of the theatre, the periods of vitality and creation, have been when the theatre was most closely linked with social life. Then it has drawn inspiration from its contact with mass emotions and experience, and in turn it has

been most successful in stirring and organising the emotions of the mass. The early Greek theatre—virtually national festivals—and the strongly popular bourgeois atmosphere of the Elizabethan stage are examples of this. On the other hand, when the theatre has become the recreation of a leisured coterie, divorced from social life and from the masses, its art has tended to become sterile for lack of inspiration; while the use of the stage—like any art—as an instrument of a ruling class to impose its ideology on the masses, suppressing and distorting the emotional life of the latter rather than appealing to it, arousing it and giving it new form, then the theatre has invariably become not only sterile, but decadent, vulgar, a putrid corpse.

The Trust Theatre

It is in this latter state that we find the bourgeois theatre to-day, particularly in the classic countries of capitalism, Britain and America. Here we have the commercial theatre in all its vulgarity, owned by profit-making trusts, run by diamond-studded managers who think in terms of “stars” and “sex-appeal.” As R. P. Dutt once said in a classic article on the subject:—

“The Trust theatre aims, not at drawing out the emotion and expression of the audience, but at stupefying, deadening and doping. A gulf is drawn between the illuminated stage and the vast auditorium of atomised individuals, whose only function is to pay for their tickets and sit to the end with chocolates (at a profit) to keep them quiet. No powerful feeling can be permitted; everything must preferably be ‘light.’ No living, interesting subjects or issues are permitted; only the most stale subjects and archaic, reactionary sentiments are permitted, centring round patriotism, the home, the career, romantic love and so forth. Like all capitalist institutions, the capitalist theatre is built on the passivity of the masses. Its most developed expression is the music hall, which seeks to bemuse the spectators with a jumble of contradictory sensations in rapid succession.” (*Labour Monthly*, Aug. 1926).

And, as with the capitalist Press, all this is done under the name of “giving the public what it wants.” Actually it is a way of castrating the emotional life of the workers, while at the same time in a hundred subtle

ways forcing upon them the standards of bourgeois ideology. The subject of a play is invariably individualistic—the husband, wife and lover problem—now so hackneyed in its narrow confines as to be sickly tedious. Sometimes it is sex *v.* duty (patriotic or business). Invariably the hero is a virtuous youth who climbs the social scale and becomes a prosperous bourgeois with a house and servants, a motor car, a doting spouse and the inevitable children. If a worker appears on the scene, he is either a gross caricature or else talks like an Oxford aesthete rather than a sturdy proletarian. Not least offending in this respect are often so-called “socialist” plays; for instance, the plays of Miles Malleson, whose “Labour” hero is so much at home with a baronet’s daughter in a Mayfair drawing-room, and whose *Fanatics* discusses the “sex problem” as though the social problem and the class struggle did not exist.

The “Art Theatre”

Alongside the “commercial theatre” of the big trusts (dead so far as art is concerned, deadly dangerous in the seductive dope it “puts over” on the masses) there exist numerous attempts by groups of intellectuals to revive the drama by means of “experimental” or “repertory” theatres. In this country these are either financed by some local capitalist and controlled by him according to his whims and fancies, or else are permanently handicapped and stunted for lack of means and resources. In some foreign countries theatres of this kind, such as that of Reinhardt in Germany and Copeau in France, have done some valuable pioneer work, mainly along the lines of new stage devices and methods of production. They have usually been content, however, merely to replay old plays in a new way; they have done little to create *new* plays and a new drama—have done little to fill new bottles with new wine. Moreover, this “art theatre” movement, however pure its aims may have been, has, in practice remained as completely divorced from the

WHAT CONNECTION HAD THE HYMN

“How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,” with the African Slave Trade? See our New Textbook.

masses as the commercial theatre. It has usually become the fad of a coterie of intellectuals; and, for want of contact with social life, such new drama as it produces has tended to become increasingly introvert (concerned with the mental conflicts of the *individual*), obsessed with individual sex problems (what Lenin called "spending all one's days contemplating one's own navel") and its ideology increasingly mystical, both in form and content. For lack of inspiration, therefore, this movement, however brilliant for a time, tends soon to become sterile. In this country the various "repertory players" and "popular" dramatic societies usually do nothing more daring than produce works of some of the more "advanced" of bourgeois dramatists (*e.g.*, Shaw and Galsworthy; and even they in their later works have become definitely reactionary). They are often dominated by middle-aged spinsters who censor the appearance of anything "shocking" to bourgeois morality. At their best they are concerned to do no more than diffuse current bourgeois culture among the workers (like the W.E.A.); their patronage has no thought of stimulating new collective emotions in the workers and would be horrified at the thought of drawing inspiration from class-consciousness.

A Worker's Theatre

What hope, then, is there in a new mass theatre of the workers? Clearly, any big results in this direction cannot be expected until *after* the social revolution. A theatre can only develop as a *whole*, requiring the combined creativeness of audience, actors, scene designers, musicians, electrical engineers, author and producer; and simply for lack of time, resources, available personnel and equipment, little can be hoped for until a Workers' State (as in Russia) puts the means at the disposal of a new workers' theatre. In a few exceptional cases the means may be available for a workers' experimental theatre in a bourgeois country, as with the famous Piscator theatre in Berlin; but even this laboured seriously under difficulties; and we should be guilty of the absurdest Utopianism if we expected anything so ambitious to be other than quite exceptional. But this does not mean

that in a more limited field a workers' theatre movement here and now may not do some useful creative work. This it can do, for instance, in the form of burlesque and satire, semi-cabaret, semi-circus commentaries on current events (like the Russian "Blue Blouses"), historical pageantry dealing with events in the class struggle, and so forth. But this it will succeed in doing, first if it tries not to be too ambitious and tries to reach a more limited end more artistically; second, if it makes a clean break with the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois "popular" dramatic movements ("Reformists" as Dutt calls them), who merely try to diffuse bourgeois drama among the masses. To act existing plays of the ordinary type is not likely to be the most successful thing for workers' theatre groups to attempt; for one thing they haven't got the resources to do them well; for another, it is copying rather than creating something new. But to try to do something *different* from the ordinary type of "popular" or "repertory" society and to *create* new forms of expression adapted to the needs of the workers' movement—that may well be an important and powerful counterblast to the dope of the commercial theatre, and also a valuable contribution to the workers' theatre of the future.

A NEW PLAY BY TOLLER

A new play by Ernst Toller (*Hoppla*, by Ernst Toller, Benn, 6/-) is an event in the world of working-class drama; but his latest work, to one reader at least, cannot be compared with that great and moving drama, *Masses and Man*.* *Hoppla* contains twice as much argumentation, but is not half as convincing; it carries modern expressionist methods to far greater lengths, but is not nearly so effective. The theme is the aftermath of a post-war "democratic" Revolution, in which the only victors are the political opportunists—and the financiers; in which exploitation proceeds as flauntingly as ever, and corruption abounds rather more than ever. There is a return in the play to certain characteristics which were very strongly marked in *The Hobblerman* (translated also under the title *Broken-brow*). The abnormal sensitiveness of the writer is again a prominent note. Every item in the vast sum of human suffering sets his nerves a-quiver, and in his plays he evinces a perfect passion of pity as he depicts the tragi-comedy of life. But in this play the passion is not disciplined and loses in force. Moreover, whereas *Masses and Man* was deeply and nobly inspiring, *Hoppla* is profoundly pessimistic; two women characters—old Mother Meller and Eva Berg—provide the only gleam of light. T. A.

* Copies, 2/8 post free, from the N.C.L.C.

DOPE DISTRIBUTORS. III:—



"HIS MASTER'S VOICE"

THE WIRELESS

By ELLEN WILKINSON, M.P.

THE funniest things in the Press are not in the comic papers. The Pleb with a sense of humour can extract a "laugh and bitters" from almost any copy of a capitalist newspaper. The perfect pearl of the last few weeks was the row raised by the Lords of Fleet Street when the publication by the B.B.C. of a journal called the *Listener* was announced. It appeared that the publishing ventures of this nationalised enterprise had produced a net profit of £90,000 in one year—too juicy a plum to be left to the public weal! But to talk about *profits* would have been somewhat crude. So the leading articles of our great organs of public opinion concentrated on the danger of placing in the hands of the State machine such a mighty engine of propaganda!

When the N.C.L.C. points out that State control of education means, to-day, capitalist control and capitalist propaganda in lieu of real education, it is told—even by "sound" Labour men—that only impartial "truth" is administered in these democratic days. Yet the Garvins and Rothermeres discover the selfsame danger when it is a question of their own monopolies in "truth" being challenged.

Remember the Strike

Obviously, the whole wireless organisation not only is, but by its very nature is bound to be, a mighty engine of propaganda, to be used openly against the workers in time of crisis, and more subtly in 'normal' periods. We all know what happened during the General Strike. The officials of the B.B.C.

—earnest, high-principled men according to their lights—at that time took it for granted that it was their duty to place themselves on the Government side; just as a soldier might have obeyed orders to shoot down strikers. No one would regard the army as "impartial" in such circumstances. And the biggest danger of the B.B.C.—to the workers—is its assumed impartiality at ordinary times; since any such assumption is obviously nonsensical in the present organisation of society.

I remember a conversation I had with a highly-placed B.B.C. official after the Strike. I had been asked for a written opinion (for publication) as to the B.B.C.'s 'attitude' and activities during the dispute. I had replied that while I could hear so many distortions of the truth free of charge in the House of Commons, it seemed superfluous for me to pay for a license to hear more on the wireless. The official was highly indignant, and we argued it out for over two hours. He closed by saying solemnly, "How can you charge us with taking sides when we were most careful only to give the official Government bulletin without any comment of our own at all?" Then I gave it up.

Inculcating "Loyalty"

After all—in schools, newspapers, at Savoy Hill, or anywhere else—it is not so much what is said, as *what is taken for granted*, that constitutes the subtlest form of propaganda. Take the King's illness as an example. Twice a day, in a voice usually reserved for the most solemn religious occasions, the announcer read the latest bulletin about the King's health. Each time it was repeated, very slowly, so that not one precious word should be lost. Now most people were interested, as a matter of news apart from any other consideration,

in learning how the King was getting on. But will anyone deny that all this solemn ritual and palaver, twice daily, constituted as effective a piece of propaganda on behalf of the institution of monarchy as could be imagined? After all, this institution of monarchy, as one among various forms of political government, is a controversial question for many citizens. But the B.B.C.'s handling of it implied, not less effectively because it was done without argument, that monarchy was an institution second only to the Deity. What would happen to anyone who suggested a Wireless Talk on "Republicanism as a Form of Government for Great Britain"? . . . 'Controversial,' of course.

Kings and Labour Leaders

Or take the educational courses arranged by the B.B.C. for schools. Here again the unconscious bias peeps out in all sorts of places. In the printed synopsis of a history course recently issued, a course based on the idea of an onlooker describing certain historical events, there was one section dealing with Wat Tyler's rebellion (the only one, incidentally, which dealt with any event from working-class, as distinct from Court or governing-class, history). The authors of the series described how the "gallant young King" rode out to meet the rebels, and how the Lord Mayor of London, observing a threatening expression, or something of the kind, on the face of the working-class leader, felled him to the ground with his mace. No suggestion that it was a dastardly deed! And *of course* the King was a "gallant" young man—though history knows him for a miserable coward who broke his most solemn pledges. And *of course* a working-class leader deserved to be struck down if his bearing in the presence of his betters was not sufficiently respectful! To adopt any other attitude towards kings and labour leaders would *of course* have been 'controversial'! . . . It is all more dangerous, because more subtle, than the crude propaganda of the "Pip, Squeak and Wil-

fred" stuff for children in one of the popular dailies, which once, I recall, invited its young readers to write in suggesting tortures for some captured object in the story labelled "the Bolshevik."

'Controversial' Topics

The B.B.C., we know, is very careful about 'controversial' topics. It is interesting to note what it considers 'non-controversial.' I pick up a number of the *Listener* (very ably edited by Mr. Lambert, a prominent member of the W.E.A.), and find an article (an emphatically anti-Russian article) by Mr. Vernon Bartlett on "Afghanistan." Now Afghanistan is a controversial subject; and the British Government's relations with that country, and its rulers, are highly controversial topics, too. But is it likely that we shall get, in a Government-controlled organ of publicity, anything but the official British Government point of view on the matter? If, say, an anti-imperialist composed a "talk" on the danger of British Imperialism to the independence of Afghanistan; or, if the author of the *Plebs' Short History of the British Empire* offered to recount a few selected facts from past history as to British relations with Eastern countries—would they be treated in the same "of-course-there-is-no-controversy-about-this" manner as Mr. Bartlett?

As a matter of fact, N.C.L.C. speakers and teachers have been rigidly and expressly excluded from any representation whatsoever on this "entirely impartial educational work" of the B.B.C.*

I remember, soon after I got into Parliament, being invited to broadcast a talk about women workers. In the MS. which I had to submit I ventured the opinion that the wages of women workers were in many cases too low. My 'invitation' got no further! But Lady Houston, because she gave £30,000 to the Lord Mayor's Fund, was recently allowed to lecture the miners, vilify their leaders, and air the most insulting and

* See Article, p. 65.

HOW CONVICTS HELPED TO BUILD

the Empire

See our New Textbook

ignorant remarks about Trade Unionism without anyone being allowed to say a word on the other side. In view of this, one can just imagine how the officials of the B.B.C. would rise in holy anger if a *Labour* Government proposed to use its machinery for putting across a working-class point of view. *That* would be propaganda!

Whereas keeping things as they are is not propaganda. Taking things as they are for granted is not propaganda. To desire, or to aim at, change is 'controversial.' . . . For which reasons, the wireless, even more than the directly-capitalist-controlled press and films, and theatre, is dangerous and deadly from the working-class point of view.

DOPE DISTRIBUTORS. IV:—

THE PRESS

By C. R. DE GRUCHY
(Assistant Editor of *The Miner*)

TO offer observations about the press as an agency of capitalist chloroform in a magazine devoted to working class education may, at first sight, seem to be a work of supererogation. He who is intelligent enough to read *The PLEBS* will surely not need a warning to treat the capitalist press with the disrespect it so richly merits. Yet readers of *The PLEBS* have not only themselves, but also their fellow-workers to consider, and a few remarks from the inside as to how the merry game goes on may assist readers in inducing in their workmates that healthy contempt for "what the papers say," which is the first step towards salvation from our point of view.

The Men in Control

Let us first clear away the obvious points. As is generally known to all workers in the cause of Labour, the London newspapers are mainly under the control of three London groups, the figureheads of which are Lord Rothermere, Lord Beaverbrook and the Berry Brothers; representative of these combines are the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Express*, and the *Daily Telegraph*. Outside of them stand the *Times*, the *Morning Post*, the *Daily News* and the *Star* (largely controlled by the Cadbury interests) and, of course, the *Daily Herald*. Of the proprietors of these journals, Lord Rothermere is a man who, by the accident of being

brother to the late Lord Northcliffe, has become the proprietor of many newspapers. Lord Beaverbrook is a Canadian business man with a taste for political intrigue. The Berry Brothers have wide interests outside the newspaper world, mainly in coal, steel, and kindred industries. The principal proprietor of the *Times*, Major Astor, is a millionaire of American origin. The *Morning Post* is owned by a consortium of which the Duke of Northumberland is the leading figure, while the Cadbury interests are Quakers and cocoa manufacturers.

Trustification

It is a painfully obvious argument that newspapers owned by interests such as these are not likely to present a favourable view of Socialism or of the workers' case in the day-to-day industrial struggle. The concentration of control in fewer and fewer hands constitutes one of the gravest problems of present-day life; and the urgency of this problem has been intensified by the tendency of these groups, manifest in the last two years, to extend their control to cover the more important provincial news-



"IF YOU SEE IT IN BIG CAPITALS
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papers. Of these the *Manchester Guardian* (Liberal) almost alone remains free from any contact with one or other of the press trusts. Elsewhere, throughout the country, journal after journal is falling into the hands of one or other of these groups. Even those which are not directly controlled are forced to get their news service from the great Press Agencies, which again are largely subject to the influence of vested interests. The menace to free discussion implied by this needs no elaboration and should be driven home at every opportunity.

The means by which it is attempted to influence public opinion in an anti-Labour direction are many and various; but here it is important to correct a misapprehension widespread in the Labour Movement. The proprietors and administrators of the more important newspapers are, for the most part, too clever to deal in direct and detectable misrepresentation. The vision of the journalist as an intellectual prostitute and paid liar for the capitalist class, so often conjured up by the rank-and-file Socialist, is by no means a correct one. The journalist is commonly a rather cynical and disillusioned man of the world, quite well-disposed towards the workers, but acutely aware that there are some things he must not say if he wishes to keep his job. The average reporter turns in as accurate and painstaking a report of a Labour speech as of a Tory speech. It is when the sub-editors get busy upon it that the mischief happens. So much can be done by judicious cross-heading, by the careful insertion in the Tory speech of (*cheers*) and by cutting the Labour speech "on grounds of space." It really is not necessary to indulge in direct misrepresentation. An equally damaging effect can quite as easily be produced without definite mis-statement.

The Art of Sub-Editing

So with the strike or lockout. It is possible, without making a single mis-statement of fact, indeed often using press material supplied by the workers' side, to bias the reader hopelessly against the strikers and to induce in his mind the definite impression that these are terribly misguided people whose nonsense no sensible

person, of course, will listen to, but which is printed just for the sake of fair play.

But the operations of the press as a chloroforming agency are far more serious and more subtle in other directions than in the skilful misrepresentation of the rights and wrongs of a particular skirmish in the class struggle such as a by-election or an industrial dispute. Even when nothing of the sort is happening, the press is conducting every day a subtle anti-Socialist campaign; and it is doing so without any positive lying, without any direct and recognisable propaganda, but simply by the exercise of a judicious selection of the items to which it will give prominence. It is steadily engaged in concentrating the attention of its readers upon the things that do not matter and by consequence diverting it from the things that do matter.

" Stunts "

A few obvious examples will spring to the mind of every reader. The *Daily Mail* has from time to time concentrated public attention upon such supremely important subjects as the healthful results of eating bread made of coarsely milled flour ("Standard Bread"), the growing of sweet peas, and the desirability of a new type of male headgear (the "Sandringham Hat") distinct both from the bowler and the soft felt hat, but partaking of the nature of both!

Even when no stunts of this kind are in being the press carries on these tactics. Pick up any capitalist daily paper, more especially a picture paper such as the *Sketch* or *Mirror*. Measure up the amount of space devoted respectively to news of real public importance, such as international and industrial politics, scientific discoveries, literary criticism, etc., on the one hand, and the pointless doings of amiable nonentities who happen to be born with titles, on the other. Consider the amount of attention devoted to the most unimportant doings of a personally impeccable royal family. A copy of the *Daily News* lies before me as I write, in which the putting up to auction at a sale in Berlin of a private letter from His Majesty the King is made the subject of a regular full page "screech"! It is hard to see that the course of history will be altered by this

event. Other newspapers that lie before me have two, three, or four pages out of 16 or 20 entirely devoted to accounts of the peregrinations of a public-spirited gentleman who apparently contrives to dine in three places every night in order that he may convey to an expectant world the news that Lady Poldoodle (who is, of course, the sister of Lady Dinkydido) has had her hair shingled again.

The Appeal to Snobs

The psychology displayed by these people is admirable in its subtlety. There are so many people in this country of ours whose favourite hobby is what the Americans call "keeping up with the Jones's," in other words, trying to make themselves out a little wealthier than they really are. They are to be cured only by the stern dose of realism that would be induced by a spell of unemployment or by a careful study of the processes of present-day capitalism; and the press is deliberately engaged in making matters worse.

Some space, of course, the press must devote to matters of real public importance, but it can relegate them to a position of lesser moment by the judicious practice of the art of "make-up." When the average tired worker sees a society wedding reported on page 1, across two columns, with a "streamer," while a House of Commons debate which may change the history of the next decade is described as dull by a Parliamentary representative and placed on page 11 underneath the advertisement for Beecham's Pills, he not unpardonably concludes that the first event is or ought to be the more important; and there is little chance of his realising that the second event may have far-reaching and disastrous effects upon the daily livelihood of himself and thousands of his fellow-workers.

The Artful Headline

Much can be done by the careful use of heads and crossheads, care being exercised both as to their wording and as to their size. I remember, during the sessions of the Food Commission in 1925, reading in a mid-afternoon edition of the *Evening Standard* a

reasonably accurate and fair summary of the evidence which Mr. E. F. Wise had given before it that morning. By chance another member of my family happened to buy a late evening edition of the same paper. The news item occupied the same space; but half Wise's evidence was cut out, and the vacant space was occupied by an interview with the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, explaining why Mr. Wise was wrong. Also, the heading had been altered to "More Labour Food Nostrums."

Another excellent example was provided a few days ago, when an aeroplane operating on the North-West Frontier accidentally bombed and killed a number of troopers of an Indian cavalry regiment. Commander Kenworthy asked in the House of Commons, "Was the aeroplane engaged in practice or was it on active service?" (*Daily Herald*).

On Catching New Readers

"YOUR job is to sell PLEBS. If you allow yourself to be turned away by a rude remark, then you don't do your job. . . . A Pleb who can't stand being laughed at should book his seat for the Revolution and then get from under our feet and go to bed. He's no good to us."

FRED CASEY (PLEBS, Nov., 1925).

The *Evening Standard* for the same day reports Commander Kenworthy's question as being "whether there was any information about the incident." Comment is unnecessary.

I am not asked to suggest a solution for this state of affairs in this article. An anti-trust law for newspapers would not go very far, for, apart from the direct interests of the proprietors, there is the all-important fact that the revenue of a newspaper to-day is more largely derived from its advertisements than from its sales, and while the power to give or withhold advertisements remains in the hands of capitalists it may be presupposed that a newspaper carried on simply as a commercial proposition will favour the capitalist viewpoint. In my view, the only possible solution lies in the increasing development of working-class education, and in a determination on the part of all of us to increase, by every means in our power,

the sale of the *Daily Herald* and the various T.U. and Labour weeklies and monthlies.

It should further be an obligation upon us to use every opportunity of bringing mockery and sarcasm to bear upon the nonsense and slop of the capitalist press, in order to wean its devotees from it. The column known as "Current Cant," which appears weekly in the *Miner*, will illustrate what I mean. Fortunately, as we observed at the beginning, there is an increasing tendency among all classes of society to observe that "you cannot believe anything the papers say." The phrase has become almost a platitude, which is quite as it should be.

THE BEGINNING OF CIVILISATION

By H. N. BRAILSFORD

THE generation which preceded our own scarcely conceived of the origin of civilisation as a problem of history. It was content to trace the course of evolution which led from the hunting to the agricultural stage. It had begun to study the changes in climate which may have hastened the process. It was curious about the developments of belief, registered in custom and folklore, which accompanied the improvements in technique, and the tightening of the social structure. But it supposed that these steps in progress had gone on independently, at varying paces, in many regions of the world, with many beginnings and many more or less closely parallel sequels. It explained the many startling similarities, by saying that human nature would everywhere react in the same way to the same changes in environment.

It is barely possible to retain this view in the light of modern knowledge. The flint tools which evolve in a nearly identical series all over the world suggest the mutual influence even of the most primitive peoples upon each other. One can trace the routes

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which the patterns used in decorating clay pots seem to have followed, as cultures migrated. Folklore tells the same tale. The story of the Flood is a slightly embroidered chapter of history from Mesopotamia. What are we to conclude when we find it, without any obvious local basis in history, in the South Sea Islands or among North American Indians? Were such curious practices as circumcision and mummification invented many times, in many places, or did they spread from a single centre? The guess that has resulted from these and similar lines of enquiry, is that the complex of arts which we call civilisation—the domestication of animals, the cultivation of cereals, pottery, weaving and the use first of polished stone and then of copper for tools—originated in a single centre, from which it spread slowly, by trade, immigration and conquest, over the rest of the world. It may be that the diffusionist school (the late Dr. Rivers, Prof. Elliot Smith and W. J. Perry) were too confident in naming Egypt as this centre. It may be safer at present to think of the whole Middle East (Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, the Indus Valley, Turkestan) as the possible seat of invention. But, however this may be, one is coming to think of civilisation as an historical event, which, with luck, one may one day be able to date, to locate, and to explain.

A series of fortunate discoveries in recent years has brought us much nearer to the solution of this problem. Diggers have unearthed at Badari the first rude beginnings of Egyptian civilisation, with its pots, clay images, and evidences of the cultivation of grain. Flinders Petrie has filled up the gaps between these rude Badarian villages and the royal refinements of the first Pyramids. In the Indus Valley two cities have been uncovered, which enjoyed a high urban civilisation about 3000 B.C. And only this year we have had the good fortune to see at the British Museum the finds from the Biblical Ur of the Chaldees, which date from about 3500 B.C. They reveal a practised and realistic art. It could play and invent; it did not merely imitate. It could fashion the finest and most delicate goblets of metal. It could cast animals

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in gold or electrum of an astonishing realism. It had boats and wheeled carts. It revelled in the abundance of gold, which it could only have got by trade. It had a social structure so firm, so loyal, so surely based on the divinity of kings, that their servants would face death by the score, lest a queen should travel unattended to the after-world. Here clearly we are far from the beginnings. Many centuries lie between this phase and the life of a hunting tribe.

The curious reader—and who can be indifferent to the romance of these discoveries?—will find an invaluable guide to the latest results of exploration, and also to the stimulating theories of the experts, in *The Most Ancient East*, by Prof. Gordon Childe (Kegan Paul, 15/-). It is well illustrated. It is up to date. It does justice to the immense erudition of the writer, and yet the thread of the enquiry runs clear and logical through all the mass of facts. It opens wide to the imagination a new and living world.

"UNDERGOING" OUR CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

By CHRISTINE MILLAR

MORE than one strong man who many times, without qualms, has bearded his boss, has felt his heart quail at the sight of a pen. That Slippery Sam of languages—the English language—has also given him many a bad hour. These two facts don't throw any roseate hues over the prospects of a Workers' Correspondence Course Dept., whose students in any case are men and women tired after a day's work. This probably explains why so many of our students say "I have decided, after consideration, to *undergo* one of your Correspondence Courses"!

In 1923, however, there was a small growing demand for education by post and the N.C.L.C. determined to meet and develop it by establishing a definite Correspondence Course Department. True it had no money worth speaking about, but thanks to voluntary work and to the assistance of the A.U.B.T.W. and the N.U.D.A.W. who did some of the duplicating, a modest list of three subjects, Economics, Social History and English for Workers, was offered. The first month saw an enrolment of ten. To-day the department deals with fourteen courses and about 2500 students each year, and is the largest of its kind run by the workers' movement anywhere.

The students are of all kinds—bricklayers, shop assistants, clerks, engineers, weavers, soldiers, domestic servants and members of the King's Navee, of all ages between 16 and 60, and of course of both sexes. In several cases fathers and sons are taking correspondence courses and in one case a father (an A.E.U. member) and his daughter (of N.U.D.A.W.) are both taking courses. Some of the students hail from the Shetland Islands, the Bermudas, the Channel Islands, South Africa, Canada and Czecho-Slovakia,

but, of course, the great majority are from Great Britain.

Recently we were able to ascertain the percentage of Correspondence Course students of American commercial schools who completed their courses and were gratified to find that our proportion was very much higher. This is all the more remarkable as many of our students, being manual workers, have great difficulties to overcome. Unemployment, emigration, transfer to jobs away from home, opposition of parents or wives, industrial accidents, lack of facilities for study—in a kitchen where the family is carrying on its evening activities of cleaning-up, ironing, using the sewing machine, bathing a protesting baby—all handicap the worker-student.

Even St. Francis

Sometimes the "fell grip of circumstance" makes the completion of a Course impossible, but even St. Francis could not accept some of the explanations advanced for dropping-off. There is a type of student who wants to get all the papers and read them through

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without doing any work. In the interest of education, his request has to be received with an explanatory "No."

The student who is really too lazy to finish a course nearly always avails himself of the same excuse. He says that he regrets (as a matter of fact he doesn't!) that he will be unable to complete his course owing to "Circumstances over which he has no control." He can't even be bothered to invent a plausible excuse. His letter goes into the "C.O.W. file!"

Compare such letters with this, however:

"At long last I have completed my course. I have taken more than the three weeks for each lesson because I am a widower with five school children. I have to help the eldest with housekeeping when I get home at night and when that is done and home lessons are done and school lunches are made up for next day and I have read the paper it is time for bed. I have only time at the week-ends for studying, but I want you to enrol me now for the Advanced Course."

The other week a man entered the office and said that, thanks to our Courses, he had become a City Councillor. Naturally we said "Sit down, brother!" Many of our students have credited us with similar powers

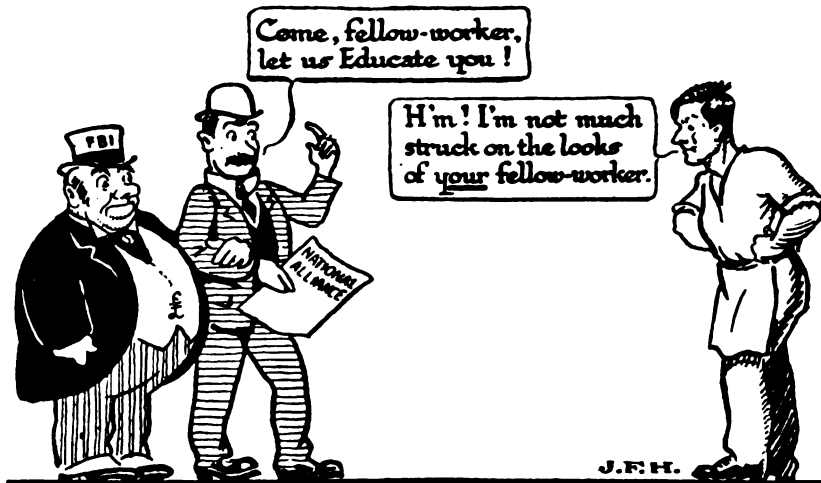
of turning them into speakers, chairmen, contributors to their Union journals and so on. The less appreciative type is represented by the man who, in reply to our request for overdue answers, sent an angry letter of eight foolscap pages (four are sufficient for the answers) pointing out that we ought to know that the writer being unemployed (he hadn't previously told us) couldn't afford the writing paper for his lesson.

To Err is Human

The Correspondence Course Department, doesn't, of course, please everybody. It now and then sends out a full list of its subjects to get in reply instructions to send on a Course of Electrical Welding, Tailor's Cutting, or—Singing (lessons by post!). We have, too, the student who sends his papers in without any name or address. When we are unable, despite much expenditure of time and ingenuity, to trace him and he does not get back his lesson, he deplores "the unbusinesslike methods of the N.C.L.C."

It takes all sorts to make a world, and we have all sorts in the Correspondence Course Department and some very good sorts too!

CO-PARTNERSHIP IN EDUCATION



(From *Plebs*, August, 1922).

IN MEMORIAM

THE last few weeks have seen the death of three comrades who were in one way or another associated with our movement in the early days; and of another who was "in harness" up to the date of his death.

Professor Bickerton, the famous astronomer, was a friend of the late Dennis Hird's and lectured more than once at the Central Labour College in the years before the war. His own experience of academic intolerance towards new ideas led him to sympathise with our working-class educational ideals.

Comrade Toccatti, one of the pioneer members of the Socialist League in William Morris's time, was a friend of many of the students at the College in pre-war days.

J. B. Askew, whose death occurred on Feb. 5th in Moscow, had contributed to The

THE B.B.C. & BIAS

By J. P. M. MILLAR

AS this issue of The PLEBS was being planned we received a letter from the B.B.C. stating that it was unable to give the N.C.L.C. representation on the Central Council for Broadcast Adult Education.

The facts are that when the N.C.L.C. heard that the Council was being set up, we enquired whether it was proposed to give representation to the N.C.L.C., as the largest purely working-class educational body in the country. We were unofficially encouraged to believe that in consequence of the importance and size of the N.C.L.C., the idea was likely to have favourable consideration. Knowing something about capitalist control of every available channel through which ideas pass we had our doubts, but when we learned that the committee

PLEBS, and is well known to hundreds of I.W.C.Ers as the translator of many Socialist classics in Kerr's famous series. In the Buckingham Palace Road days he was a frequent visitor to the PLEBS office.

It is with very great regret that we have to announce the death of W. D. Rae, who served on the N.C.L.C. Executive from the time his Union, the National Union of Sheet Metal Workers, adopted an N.C.L.C. scheme. Mr. Rae was one of the most conscientious members of our executive and did not spare himself in assisting the organisation, as will be evidenced by the fact that he also represented his Union on two of our Divisional Councils. His death came as a great shock, as he was looked upon as one of the most active of our executive members. He was London District Secretary of the Sheet Metal Workers' Union and, until a few weeks before his death, was a National Executive Member of his organisation. The Labour College Movement and the whole London working class movement have lost a very staunch champion. The N.C.L.C. was represented at the funeral, and George Hicks gave a short address at the graveside.

had apparently been set up, we wrote asking whether we were to be entitled to a seat. In reply we were informed that as the Trades Union Congress General Council were having a representative on the Committee, that representative would represent the N.C.L.C. We enquired how that could come about, and were informed that as we were a part of the T.U.C. scheme, that the T.U.C. could represent us. Our reply was that the T.U.C. scheme was dead and that in the existing circumstances therefore the T.U.C. could not represent us.

We then asked whether the W.E.A. was being given a seat on the Committee and the reply was in the affirmative. We pointed out that the W.E.A. was as much part of the T.U.C. scheme as we were, and asked how, therefore, if we were to be represented by the T.U.C., the W.E.A. was not to be represented by the T.U.C., but was to have a representative of its own? The reply was that the matter would be referred to the Committee, with the consequence already indicated, namely, no representation for the

N.C.L.C., but representation for the W.E.A.

This is, of course, another instance of how every part of the State machine is used against the Labour movement.

As a further example, our readers will recall that the Registrar of Friendly Societies and the Treasury recently interpreted the Blacklegs' Charter in such a way as to allow Civil Service Unions to have educational schemes with the W.E.A. and not with the N.C.L.C., although there is no justification in the law itself for such an interpretation. A few months before that the Inland Revenue insisted, despite our claim that we were entitled to exemption, on taxing the small amount of interest that the N.C.L.C. obtain on its bank account. It, however, exempts from taxation the interest obtained by the W.E.A.

We sympathise with and appreciate the point of view of the capitalist class in taking every conceivable step to safeguard its own interests. What we cannot understand is the Labour man or woman who is so blind that he or she can not see what is going on and supports a so-called working-class educational organisation that works hand-in-glove with the very forces that never lose a single opportunity of stabbing Labour in the back. We may be rather rude, but it appears to us that a stuffed rabbit would have more intelligence.

Anyway, may we suggest to the B.B.C. that it should arrange a wireless lecture on "The Studied Impartiality of the Governing-Class," or the "Importance of Bias in a Democratic Age."

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THE BOOKSHELF

By J. F. HORRABIN

IT is fitting that, just as we have launched a new textbook, I should say something in this column about the importance of the 'literature' side of our educational work. (As I am the author of said new textbook, it is perhaps as well that I should remind readers that PLEBS authors get no royalties, so that I can put the case in a fairly disinterested way).

I want to say that, up and down the movement, there are a lot of folks who fail to realise that this 'literature' side is of *at least equal importance* to the actual work done in the classes themselves; and that this latter is only too often very largely work wasted, because neither the tutor nor anyone else connected with the class makes any effort to insist on *reading* on the part of the students. There are, I say, a whole lot of these people, and they are as big an obstacle to the *proper growth and development of the I.W.C.E. movement as are hostile critics or rival organisations.*

Now don't misunderstand me at the outset. I am NOT suggesting that the reading-matter afforded by N.C.L.C. or other textbooks is necessarily better, wiser, or wittier than the hearing-matter which the student gets from the tutor in a class. But I am asserting that unless the student supplements—I would rather say *complements*—the latter by some *reading* on the subject of study, he is not getting educated. You can't learn even fretwork by devoting one hour a week to hearing it talked about. Still less can you acquire a reasonably sound knowledge of such matters as working-class history and the evolution of the class-struggle by such a method.

A tutor's aim in class should be to introduce his students to books; to encourage them to read, and guide them in their reading.

That is why there had to be a publishing side to our I.W.C.E. work, and that is why the sale of literature ought to be as carefully planned and organised in every class, however small, as the curriculum itself. The N.C.L.C. is handicapped in the development of its publishing side by the fact that so many folk—who ought to know better—regard the literature stall as a quite secondary item, a mere 'frill' on class work. They put no 'pep' into their salesmanship, and then complain that students won't buy. Result—no funds to finance further publications. (Mind, I do not for one moment agree that the publishing side of our work can only go on if it 'pays its own way.' There is no more reason why T.U. funds should be used to assist in running a class than in financing textbooks. Both are equally vital sides of our educational work).

I repeat—some people have got this matter into an entirely wrong perspective. (Some of them, of course, are waiting for the Perfect Textbook to appear—*then* they'll show us what they can do in the selling line!). It needs some plain talking, a bit of commonsense thinking, and then a breath or two of enthusiasm. What about it?

I have just been reading, in the American edition, Matthew Josephson's *Zola and His Time*. This is shortly to be published in England (by Gollancz),

and I urge all PLEBS readers to see that a copy is placed in their local library without delay. It is a first-class book. I put it to a pretty severe test, for I read the greater part of it while down with 'flu,' and not even that prevented me from wanting to sit up and cheer.

What a story Zola's life was! The early poverty-stricken days in the Latin Quarter; then the job as wrapping-up clerk in Hachette's publishing-house, followed by the decision to turn novelist, and the organising of every minute of his day into a schedule of planned work. (Zola didn't believe in inspiration). Then the conception of the great Rougon-Macquart series of novels—twenty years' work all planned out in detail—a 'sociological' history of every aspect and class of French society over a period of half-a-century. ("Sublimated reporter" is Josephson's happy phrase for him). The steady winning of fame, if not exactly of popularity; the brilliantly ingenious 'stunts' and censorship controversies which he himself engineered to gain more publicity; his ultimate triumph—a "best seller," not by pandering to the popular taste, but by turning out the best that was in him. And then, at the very height of fame and fortune, this fat, methodical, unromantic little bourgeois suddenly decides to risk fame, fortune, liberty, even his life, at the behest of his conscience; he deliberately takes the unpopular side in *L'affaire Dreyfus* (he had never, previously, 'meddled' in politics) and writes his vitriolic *J'Accuse* in order to compel the French Government to prosecute him, and so bring to the light of day the foul perjuries and conspiracies in high places which had made the condemnation of Dreyfus possible. . . . It is a wonderful story, with a superbly dramatic climax. Josephson's handling of the Dreyfus case alone makes the book worth while.

And what friends the man had—all of them living again in the pages of this book. Cézanne, boyhood companion and partner in the early, struggling days; Flaubert, Daudet, Turgenieff, the giants of the 'sixties and 'seventies; Maupassant, George Moore, and the younger men who came later; and, to end with, that impassioned tribute paid at Zola's funeral by Anatole France, a lifelong and oft-times bitter critic.

Moreover, Josephson does not merely tell a story. He relates Zola's work to the general development of society and of ideas in his time; noting how the purely scientific (*i.e.*, biological) ideas which were the basis of his work and philosophy at the outset were gradually, as the struggle of classes became ever more and more marked in contemporary events, encroached upon by sociological ideas—and ideals; how, in short, Zola found it less and less possible to remain detached, 'impartial'; how the man over whose head 1870-71 and the Commune seemed to pass without leaving any impression came to be the passionate challenger of Church, Army and Bureaucracy a quarter of a century later.

A great book; and not the less interesting because its author himself belongs to that group of young American poets and writers, working in Paris, who stand (more or less ranged around James Joyce) for ultra-modernity in art and literature. Josephson himself admits that, in Zola's case, he came to scoff and remained to admire.

* * *

Another book, by a member of this same group, E. E. Cummings—*The Enormous Room*—should be in every library, and be read by every Pleb. But I've no space left to say more about it.

KERR BOOKS

To PLEBS readers in the early days, Charles Kerr & Co. of Chicago were THE publishers of Marxist works. To-day they are still the largest English-speaking publishers of Marxist literature.

The N.C.L.C. Publishing Society has become agents for Kerr's famous books. Here are the titles of some of the classics:—

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A CORRECTION

J. REYNOLDS writes to point out that the statement on p. 33 of last month's PLEBS, that the A.U.B.T.W. pamphlet, *Our Next Step—Education*, "was written and illustrated by J.F.H." was erroneous.

[J.F.H. writes:—"J.R. is correct. I was responsible for the illustrations only. I apologise sincerely for allowing the mis-statement to pass (due to hurried proof-reading) and I hasten to assure J.R. that I have no desire to take credit to which I am not entitled."]

AMONG THE BOOKS

By

"PLEBS" REVIEWERS

The Technique of Controversy; Principles of Dynamic Logic, by Boris B. Bogoslavsky. (Kegan Paul).

THIS recent addition to the "International Library of Psychology, Philosophy and Scientific Method" sets out to present us with the latest fruits of American philosophy. The Marxian student, anticipating yet another variation of orthodoxy, is amazed to find that "Dynamic Logic" is no other than the much-derided "dialectic thought" of Marxism. In fact, the author, whilst paying chief tribute to Professor Dewey, makes the casual admission that the Hegelian dialectic was also developed and used "to their satisfaction" by Marx, Engels, and Dietzgen. There is certainly a striking similarity between the views expressed in this volume and our "antiquated" Marxian philosophy. Compare, for instance, Bogoslavsky's statement (page 12) that "the new reasoning is built on the experiences of a dynamic universe with motive as its essence, and with ceaseless change as its characteristic, a universe conceived as a continuous succession of different but interrelated phases of one process which are all relative to each other and perpetually flow one into another," with Dietzgen's teaching that "only the universe is something, and everything in it consists of vacillating, changing, various, varicoloured fluid, variable phenomena or relativities." (*The Positive Outcome of Philosophy*, page 422).

The foundation of Dynamic Logic, Bogoslavsky reiterates (page 139), is the abandonment of the Law of the Excluded Middle, and the recognition of that "most essential, basic, and comprehensive law of thought, 'A is both B and non-B simultaneously'"; this is but a paraphrase of Dietzgen's conclusion after a discussion of the "Law of Excluded Middle"; he declared that this traditional "law" was "fit for household use only"; "the product of modern philosophy, on the other hand, declares that the identity of people, words, and rocks is inseparably linked to their opposite, their incessant transformation." (*Positive Outcome*, page 386).

Again, compare Bogoslavsky's statement that "the essence of dynamic reasoning is the establishment of continuity between two opposite poles of a unit of thought, which tends to terminate in the realisation of their qualitative identity" (page 18), with Dietzgen's remark that "the central truth of philosophy is that we proceed from the multiplicity of sense perceptions to the concept of unity, and not vice-versa"; "in all things always remember the universal interrelation." (*Positive Outcome of Philosophy*, p. 165 and 225).

In dealing with the position of Hegel, our author, in terms almost identical with those of Engels, shows that we must abandon the metaphysical parts of Hegel's teaching, but retain his ideas of continuous change and the universal interrelation." (Bogoslavsky, p. 217-221; Engels, *Feuerbach*, p. 95-6).

The whole work is an eloquent elaboration of Marxian philosophy, although there is only one reference to Marx in the whole book; if it is indeed the independent result of American professional philosophy, we Marxists must congratulate ourselves on an unexpected con-

firmation of our teachings. It is rare to-day to hear such unconscious tribute from the official philosophers of the Universities.

There is, however, one significant feature in the book. As if elaborating Engels' statement that "Nature is the proof of dialectics" (*Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, p. 34), our disciple of "America's foremost philosopher" delves into every branch of physical and biological science in order to show that "Nature works dialectically and not metaphysically" (Engels); on sociology, however, where this method, in the hands of the socialists, has produced its most fruitful results, Bogoslavsky is completely silent. The patrons of Columbia University do not object to daring theories about the Fourth Dimension and the nature of the Atom, but they will not permit their "graduated flunkeys" to question the excellence, permanence and necessity of the present social system. Our capitalists have their philosophers well trained.

* * *

The Economic Advance of British Co-operation (Co-operative Union, 2/-) is a very useful book. A brief historical introduction leads to a very clear description of the organisation and main characteristics of the Movement. Progress is illustrated by many tables of statistical data. A disconcerting fact is that 7 per cent. of the membership holds two-thirds of the total share capital, whilst at the other end one-half of the total membership holds only 2 per cent. of the total share capital. Another disturbing analysis of sales per member reveals that the purchases of the average members have decreased by 30 per cent. between 1913 and 1926. There are, however, a number of factors which operate to modify this tendency; nevertheless, this is a matter for serious concern to co-operators. An interesting chapter deals with co-operative employment, and the author concludes that the movement has not succeeded in any appreciable degree in developing towards the Rochdale aim of "self employment." A useful bibliography and several appendices round off the study. J.H.

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The following chapter headings will show the scope of *Wages*, by M. Dobb (Cambridge Economic Handbooks, 5/-) :—"The Wages System"—"Wages and the Standard of Life"—"Theories of Wages"—"Trade Unionism and Wages," etc. It will not prove easy reading for the general reader, but is an excellent book for classes and study circles. Here and there points will be hotly debated over—some of them because very familiar theoretical features are here presented in strange garb. After reading this book, workers will be better able to decide whether it is likely that their wage position will improve under capitalism. G.P.

Tolpuddle : an Historical Play (by Reginald Sorensen ; T. C. Foley, 1/6 and 2/6) is an interesting play, written around the struggle of the famous Dorchester Labourers for the right to combine. The body of the play is sound drama ; but the introduction of present-day characters does not appear to have assisted the movement of the play, or, incidentally, to have lessened the problem of production ; and perhaps the play would have been more effective without this apparently irrelevant device. By the way, is it historically correct that the Labourers were betrayed by a Government spy, or that the original sentence of seven years' transportation was subsequently reduced to three ? It is stated that the Walthamstow Players have performed the play before many appreciative audiences, and other groups are invited to write to the author for advice respecting production and for particulars of fees, etc. T. A.

Upton Sinclair decided to write *Boston* (Werner Laurie, 10/6) on August 22nd, 1927, on receipt of a telephone message that Sacco and Vanzetti were dead. It is a "contemporary historical novel" ; in all that concerns the main drama it is designed as history, not as fiction, but imaginary characters mingle with the real ones and there is a fictional plot as well as an historical one. This is not such an "unusual art-form" as Sinclair suggests (I think both Wells and Bennett have done something very similar) and it is quite all right if you know the rules. Most fiction is history, more or less, and certainly a great deal of "history" is fiction. What is, perhaps, new about *Boston* is that its main theme is a public affair, part of contemporary history, and that its fictional episodes and characters are strictly subsidiary to that theme.

But August 22nd, 1927, is not yet far enough off for us to be much concerned with this book as an "art-form" ; most of us have still vivid memories of reading the news that the seven years' torture of Sacco and Vanzetti had ended in the electric chair ; their names bring to us again the thrill of anger and horror at the incredible finale to this long tragedy of capitalist bloodlust. Sinclair says, "It seemed to me that the world would want to know this story." He has told it well—in over 700 closely-printed pages—and no socialist should miss it. Here we have the terrible story—and the setting that made it possible. The aristocracy of great bankers and lawyers, the ruthless industrialists, the rotten police and the monstrous detective machine, inspired by a blind hatred and terror of the Bolshevik bogey, all harrying these two wretched wops to their doom, because they had dared to raise their heads in "free" America and denounce the exploitation of their fellows.

It is impossible for us to read this story unmoved, but let us take comfort in the thought that perhaps after all Sacco and Vanzetti do not need our pity ; they would not have chosen to avoid their fate. They have gained what they would have regarded as the best and

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greatest thing life could give—immortality in the roll of proletarian martyrs. They were just two poor common workers, and their name liveth for ever. E.J.

Why Anglo-Russian Diplomatic Relations should be Restored, by W. P. Coates (Anglo-Russian Parliamentary Committee, 1/-) is well worth the "bob" for its statement of the present economic position and tendencies in Soviet Russia. Industry, Finance, Trade and Social Legislation are touched upon. But the point of the booklet is to prove "*Why Anglo-Russian Diplomatic Relations should be Restored.*" Mr. Coates does this with a convincing completeness. To strengthen his claim, he produces quotations from authoritative quarters, bourgeois economists and business men, Liberal and Tory politicians, etc., etc. No Pleb, be he student or tutor, can afford not to read this book. The "material basis" is soundly established for the "superstructure" we mutually desire. T.D.

The Memorandum on the Cotton Industry (prepared by the L.R.D., and published by the United Textile Factory Workers' Association) should be in the hands of all interested in the Cotton trade. Its main features are: (a) Conclusive proof that the demand for cotton goods, both for export and in the home trade, has fallen owing to lower wages both at home and abroad; (b) that the post-war rise in price of the finished product over raw materials has been caused more by increases on overhead charges than by considerations of hours or wages; (c) that the effect of over-capitalisation in 1919-21 has been disastrous because of increased loan interest; (d) that no increase in working hours or reductions in wages can help materially to recover lost trade; (e) that the whole problem with its effect on the workers is inherent in the capitalist system. The memorandum provides ample proof of the inability of Rationalisation to solve it. P.L.T.

AN ARCHBISHOP ON TRUTH

THE Archbishop of York (Dr. Temple), speaking at a meeting held under the auspices of the W.E.A. at York, on Jan. 26th, said that the chief criticism of the Association

"came from those who considered the working-class movement should build up its own educational machinery in complete independence of those that already existed, on the ground that the existing sources of supply, particularly the Universities, were 'tainted.'

"Their friends who went about talking of 'Bourgeois Economics' and 'Working-class Economics' ignored the fact that different people naturally tended to ask different questions. The whole truth consisted of all view-points put together.

"There was no such thing as 'bourgeois' or 'Labour' economics, but there was the economic truth, of which many people knew something, but nobody knew all. They would only find it out if they put their heads together and joined in mutually assisting to find it out."

We presume that the "whole truth" about religion also consists of "all viewpoints"—Christian, Buddhist, Atheist, Fundamentalist and Heathen—"put together." And that Moral Truth can only be discovered if the burglar and the policeman, the slum-landlord and the slum child, the archbishop and the forger "put their heads together," etc. etc.

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FROM THE

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CONTROVERSIAL METHODS

Dear Comrade,—Some of your readers may have followed the recent controversy between H. Sara and myself in the *Sunday Worker* regarding "Phrenology as a Science."

A summary of the peculiar procedure employed both by Sara and the Editor of the *Sunday Worker* in this controversy may be of interest.

Sara opened the question by an entirely unsubstantiated attack upon Phrenology in an article on Dietzgen which had nothing whatever to do with his subject. I replied making my chief points the principles of Phrenology and a challenge to Sara to disprove them.

In publishing my letter the Editor of the *Sunday Worker* deleted the basic principle of Phrenology.

Sara then replied and entirely ignored my challenge to justify his condemnation of Phrenology.

In my second letter I again stated the principles of Phrenology and again challenged Sara to disprove them.

But again I was frustrated, for this time the Editor entirely deleted both my restatement of the principles of Phrenology and my challenge to Sara.

The correspondence was then closed by the Editor publishing two letters, both of which *charged me with not raising the main issue*—the scientific merits of the principles of Phrenology. One of these closing letters was by H. Sara himself.

Your readers can no doubt apply the proper adjectives to such methods and the suitable epithets to those who stooped to them.

Yours fraternally,

CHARLES L. GIBBONS.

WHAT THE N.C.L.C. IS DOING

THE N.C.L.C. has now obtained Headquarters of its own. For legal reasons the premises are owned by the N.C.L.C. Publishing Society, Ltd., which is registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act.

The premises were officially opened on Saturday, the 16th February, by Mr. George Hicks, who represents the Trades Union Congress Education Sub-Committee of the N.C.L.C. Executive. Unfortunately, owing to space reasons, it was impossible to invite anything like the number of comrades we wished to see present. Even amongst those who were invited and who informed us they would be with us, influenza was responsible for at least a dozen being absent.

As the contractors responsible for doing some of the interior repairs and fittings did not complete their work in time for the removal, with the consequence that the removal had to be postponed for about a week, it was very doubtful up to a day before the opening was due to be held whether it would be possible for the N.C.L.C. to receive its guests, especially as another difficulty had been added—the fact that all the pipes in the building were frozen. However, we did manage, and had a very representative and happy gathering. Mr. George Hicks dedicated the building to the service of the working-class movement, and especially the educational side of it.

Amongst those who spoke were Ellen Wilkinson, M.P.; John Jagger (N.U.D.A.W.), A. Dawson (Textile Workers), A. Shaw (Textile Workers), Winifred Horrabin (Plebs League), and the General Secretary, J. P. M. Millar.

Mr. A. Hodgetts (N.U.D.A.W.), on behalf of the Executive, presented Mr. George Hicks with a fountain pen as a memento not only of the occasion but as a little token of the N.C.L.C.'s deep appreciation of the services he had rendered to the I.W.C.E. movement.

PLEBS readers will therefore note—if they have not already done so—that the address of the N.C.L.C. and the PLEBS is now 15 South Hill Park Gardens, Hampstead, London, N.W.3 (Phone, Hampstead 3349). This is about the most bracing spot in London (the second coldest place in Britain during the great freeze) and consequently the staff feel they will have the necessary energy to deal with all additional book orders that college secretaries care to forward!

AFFAIRS POLITICAL—Congratulations to Andrew Clarke, M.P. (one of the N.C.L.C.'s trustees) in winning North Midlothian. Jenny Lee, who is bearing the Labour Party's banner in North Lanarkshire, is no stranger to the Edinburgh Labour College movement either. Our best wishes for a big victory.

N.C.L.C. ANNUAL MEETING AND SUMMER SCHOOL—The Annual Meeting and Summer School will be held at Welwyn Garden City (22 miles from London). The dates of the former are 27th and 28th July, and the latter 27th July and 3rd August. Send your booking fees (10/-) now. There will be no foreign summer school this year.

SCHOLARSHIPS TO THE SUMMER SCHOOL—The following Unions are providing Free Scholarships—A.U.B.T.W., Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen, Transport Workers, General and Municipal Workers. Particulars of the Scholarships will be sent in return for a stamped addressed envelope.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE—Thanks are due to the Colleges and Divisions which have sent in orders for J.F.H.'s excellent little book. Keep us busy despatching further supplies—it's a book that every Labour man will want if it's brought to his notice. Now then, Comrades!

HAS YOUR UNION AN N.C.L.C. SCHEME?—If not, what about getting a resolution down now. Tomorrow never comes!

NEW LOCAL AFFILIATIONS—Durham, 5; Mansfield, 2. What about the other Colleges. Are they down with 'flu or have the secretaries writer's cramp?

WHAT THE DIVISIONS ARE DOING

DIVISION 3.

Southend Students' Association supplemented its Lecture Programme with an address by Miss Radclyffe Hall on "The Well of Loneliness." Lectures were also delivered by T. A. Jackson, S. Saklatvala and A. J. Cook on the usual subject, "The Hell of Lowliness." The Lantern Lectures given at Ipswich and Felixstowe were well attended and arrangements are now complete for presenting the same slides at Billericay. With the assistance of Comrade Chapell, the Colchester A.E.U. Class has restarted, the subject being "Rationalisation." Staines is running a Social and Dance for the benefit of Divisional Funds.

DIVISION 4.

Abertillery L.C., in co-operation with the Trades and Labour Council, is organising a Public Lantern Lecture on "War Against War." Rhondda L.C., with Comrade Trevor David to the fore, is running a series of Lantern Lectures in the classes. The College Secretary is already boosting the Summer School and contribution cards are in circulation. Ammanford and Crosshands are also organising Lantern Lectures with the co-operation of Nun Nicholas, with the object of filling the coffers. Preparations are being made for a grand Sessional Rally in West Wales, with Comrade Frank Griffiths, our active N.U.D.A.W. secretary, in control. Merthyr L.C. is full of activity. In co-operation with the T. & L.C., arrangements are being made to run a series of lectures on "Workman's Compensation and Trade Union Law." Popular lectures are being run with the Woman's Guild, and Workman's Club, while arrangements are in hand for a Public Lantern Lecture on the Russian Revolution. The classes at Aberdare and Treharris are making good progress. Penarth is the only bright spot in the Cardiff L.C. organisation this session. Thanks to the splendid co-operation of Comrade Bowdon and his band of active I.L.P.ers, a good class is being maintained. Comrade Davies, our Shop Assistants' secretary, reports that the branch class is "sticking it" and proposes to wind up the session with a social rally. We would appeal for the full support of all old I.W.C.E.ers in Cardiff district to pull the movement together and so regain our place in the Trade Union movement. Abergavenny L.C. is limping—proposals are being made to run a series of Public Lectures in co-operation with local Division I.L.P. At

Newport the classes are going well—Comrade Richards leading the way with an Economic Class of 30. At the Public Speaking Classes, students take a *Plebs* article each week to review and criticise, thus providing speaking practice, discussion upon modern problems, and extended sale of *Plebs*. Ogmere Vale L.C. reports progress—our Comrade Lloyd is getting local support, increased attendance at classes, and increased sale of literature despite local circumstances.

DIVISION 7.

The Division has now 16 films upon various subjects connected with our work. Colleges are urged to make more use of the lantern. Arrangements have been made for a comrade to take the lantern out and operate it. The charge is 2/6 and fares. On March 10th, Comrade Dixon gave a lantern lecture at Keighley—200 were present and enjoyed the lecture. The Organiser recently gave a lantern lecture to the Leeds branch of the Plasterers, delegates from the Building Trades Federation and the Trades Council were present and other lantern lectures are to be arranged as a result. A class at Normanton commenced with 28 students; the new secretary is Arthur Sylvester, 28 Haw Hill View, Normanton. The Mexboro' A.E.U. Branch are now arranging for a class in their club room; this follows a visit by the Organiser before the Sheffield District Committee of the A.E.U. The Wath Main Yorkshire Mine Workers Branch have a scheme with the Division, and under the unions' educational scheme applied for a grant to cover text books for the class. Up to the present they have been put off by various pretexts. They are persistent, however, as it is understood that classes organised under the W.E.A., by the various miners' branches, are having no difficulty in the matter. The Cottingham Class (Hull), with Comrade T. Baldwin, is going strong, despite strong W.E.A. opposition in the district, and the local comrades are to be congratulated on the growth of the class. Hedden Bridge, whose class has been one of the successes of the present session, wound up its October-December term with a Supper and Social evening, at which a case of cutlery was presented to the tutor, Hector Highley of the Halifax College. Let us hope that, despite periods of unemployment, Comrade Highley will be able to find full employment for his present. At the recent Annual Meeting of the Bradford College, the Divisional Lantern was introduced as an innovation, with Jim Backhouse as lecturer. This college now has ideas of having a lantern of its own. On February 23rd, they assisted Miners' Relief with a meeting in the Textile Hall, with A. J. Cook as speaker,

and on the same day at 6.30 they held a Social in the Co-operative Cafe.

DIVISION 8.

LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT LABOUR COLLEGE.—A successful One-Day School was held in the Co-operative Centre, Birkenhead, on February 24th, Tom Lowe (Chairman, Warrington Co-operative Society), being the lecturer. A "Local Government" Class has been commenced at Garston, over 30 young members of the Labour Party attending. The W. Toxteth L.P. are contemplating a similar course. The usual Tutors Class will be held in Liverpool, commencing in April. Names of intending students should be sent to the Organiser.

S.E. LANCs. LABOUR COLLEGE.—Congratulations to Coun. D. S. Morton on his election as Chairman of Stockport Co-operative Society.

DIVISION 11.

IRELAND.—Our recent public programme contained an interesting Lantern Lecture on Robert Burns, by John S. Clarke. The Y.M.C.A. Hall was well filled, despite the "flu" epidemic. Alderman Harry Midgley occupied the chair. The Lantern Lecture by A. Ellis, in the I.L.P. Hall, on "Tsarist Russia," had a crowded house. A Lantern Lecture on "War" was given by the Organiser in Lisburn to start the Jan.-March class. The results were very encouraging. Our thanks are due to the Lisburn students for their splendid assistance. In Belfast, Mrs. M'Coubrey, a voluntary tutor, is contesting Dock Ward in a Municipal bye-election.

DIVISION 12.

As the session advances Class activities and attendances are well maintained throughout the Division. The steady and faithful service of some class secretaries is a thing to marvel at. Much of our work would be absolutely impossible if it were not for this devotion.

The main difficulty in Division 12 at the present time is a lack of voluntary tutors. With adequate assistance of this kind a further extension of our work would become immediately possible. Time would have solved some of these difficulties if it had not been for unemployment and victimisation. The Division is very grateful for the services rendered by Comrades Foulger, Bull, and Crispin in connection with Class lecturing. If this should meet the eye of anyone in the Counties of Notts, Derby, Leicester, or Northants, who is prepared to undertake tutorial work, the Organiser would be glad to hear from them.

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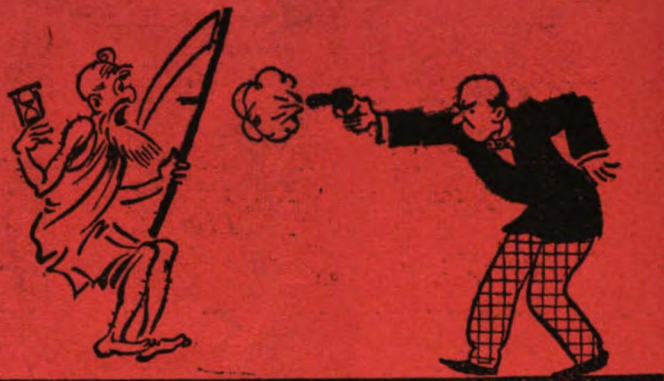
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