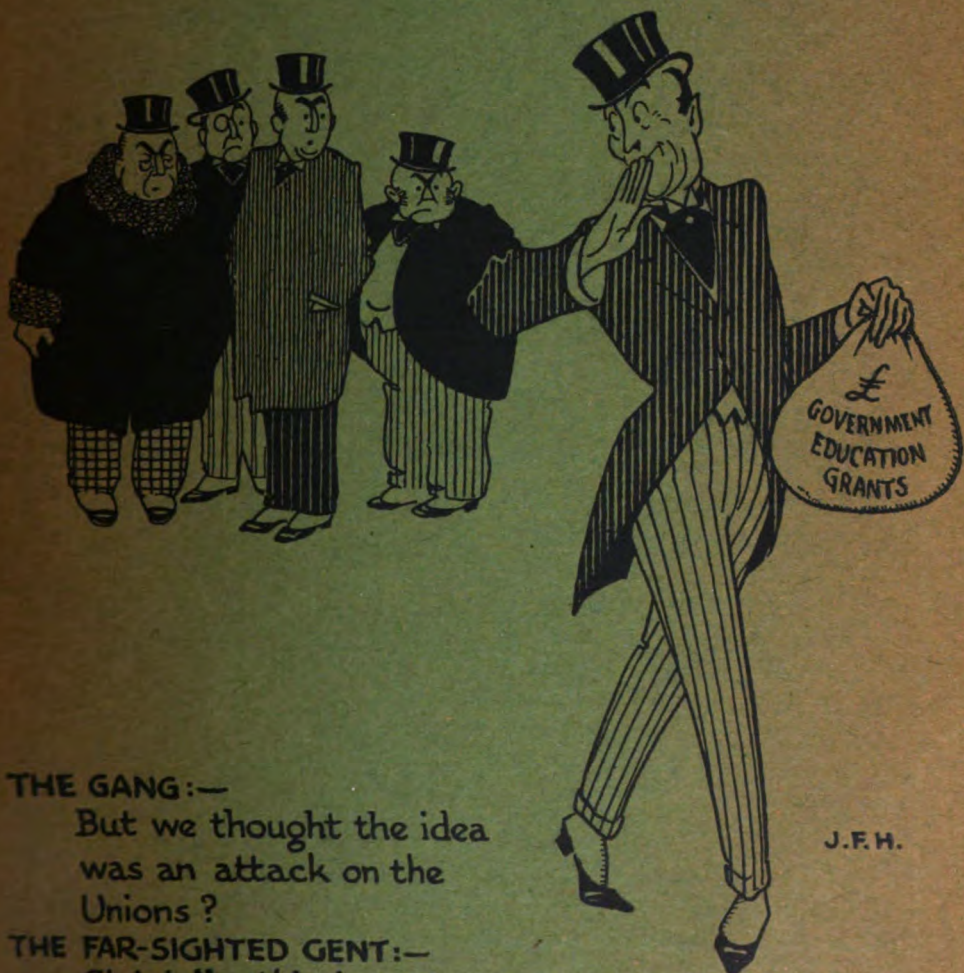


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THE PLEBS

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The PLEB POINT of VIEW

THE account on another page, by the N.C.L.C. General Secretary, of the progress of "negotiations" with the General Council of the T.U. Congress in the matter of Working-Class Education should set at rest the doubts and suspicions of some I.W.C.Ers. That such doubts should be felt is quite natural and understandable; long-protracted negotiations are invariably a pretty severe test of one's patience, and workers, at all events, have a healthy suspicion of anything remotely resembling secret diplomacy. But there is neither necessity nor justification for any undue alarm about what may or may not emerge from the discussions of the T.U.C. Advisory Committee. No concessions have been, or are likely to be, made on matters of

principle. And for the rest, let us all remember that no new direction of policy is involved in the effort to secure Congress support for, and active participation in, our educational work.

From the very outset the N.C.L.C. has based its activities on the financial support of the Trade Unions—those same Unions which, collectively, make up the T.U. Congress. A primary aim, indeed, of the I.W.C.E. movement since the very earliest days of the foundation of the Central Labour College was the recognition of independent working-class education as an integral part of Trade Union activity. To win the T.U. Congress over to this view is, therefore, not merely “policy,” but is a fundamental part of our task. And though we might be well content to go on as we have been going, gaining the support of Union after Union and building up an efficient organisation as a result of their support, it is perfectly obvious that, once an invitation has come from the central body of the workers’ movement to confer with them on the very matter we are interested in, we could not—without denying our whole previous policy—have gone on “gangin’ oor ain gait.”

What we have to see to—and what J. P. M. Millar’s report makes it quite clear that the N.C.L.C. representatives on the committee have been vigorously fighting for—is that *independent* working-class education, and not any sort of “workers’ education,” secures Congress’ recognition. And that issue, as soon as it comes to the actual discussion of ways and means, raises the (practically speaking) fundamental question of dependence or otherwise on Government grants. Those people who are out simply for an extension of ordinary educational facilities to adult workers are perfectly logical in urging not merely the acceptance of such grants but a demand for them on a still larger scale. We who stand for independence as naturally oppose this; and one of our strongest arguments is that the whole working-class movement for which the T.U. Congress speaks bases its industrial and political activities on this very same concept of independence. The difficulty is that this is not only a matter of principle but of “principal”—in the financial sense; and as every Marxist knows, questions involving £ s. and d. are very often harder to settle satisfactorily than purely ideological ones.

Let us add our own appeal to that made by Millar (in his article and in “N.C.L.C. Notes”) for a Big Push in Independent Working-Class Education *now*. The stronger our movement outside the council-chamber, the more effectively can our representatives push our case within. Don’t let us waste even two minutes of time in discussing—yet—how far, or how little, we ought to go in the direction of “co-operation” with anybody else. Let’s celebrate Labour’s Centenary Year by the biggest campaign yet on behalf

of Real workers' education. (And if any opponent of our movement flatters himself that in anything written above he can discern a hint of some sort of "split" in the I.W.C.E. movement, may Heaven foster his delusion in order to make more startling the rude awakening that's coming to him.)

If the circulation of The PLEBS is anything to go by—and naturally we believe it is—that Big Push in our movement is already well on the way. We printed 8000 of the January Special Number—**8000** nearly a thousand more than our previous top figure. As already announced, before the middle of the month we were sold out. Which was good—but better now follows. In some trepidation we

The APRIL number of THE PLEBS
will be a

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Articles and special features all about ourselves, and what we stand for. Something about past history, and about what we hope to do in the near future. Just the kind of number to put in the hands of the people who are always asking "What *are* Plebs?" and who are still uncertain as to the precise meaning of those mystic letters, I.W.C.E. If YOU are one of US, you'll help us to do a Big Push with this issue.

Send in your order for April early.

Don't wait until we've sold out before ordering extra copies.

printed 8000 of the February issue, which, note, was not a Special Number. *By the middle of the month we had sold out again.* Eight thousand two months running is a magnificent achievement, and we heartily thank all our friends everywhere who have played their part in it. Can we maintain it—nay, improve on it—throughout 1925? We can, if everyone will respond with the same enthusiasm as they have shown during the past two months. We don't want big figures just for the figures' sake. We want them because every PLEBS "planted" means a blow struck in the fight for Independent Working-Class Education; and because the better The PLEBS pays its way the more financial margin we shall have to devote to sundry other much-needed publications. Remember! Nobody—

public or private, official or unofficial—subsidises The PLEBS. It's a Workers' Own organ. Enough said.

Next month's Special Number is not only going to be one which no I.W.C.Er. must miss, but one which will be especially useful in arousing the interest of those who as yet know us not. Help us to reach these by planning a little special missionary work of your own, *and by letting us have your order in good time before we print.* What advance on 8,000 shall we be able to register?

Also, don't forget to push the new N.C.L.C. Report as vigorously as possible; and note the publication date—and reduced price—of the new revised edition of *A Worker Looks at History*, for which there is already a big demand.

J. F. H.

“OUR PATRIOTISM— LOYALTY TO OUR CLASS”

The N.C.L.C. has been exceedingly fortunate in getting its Hon. President, Mr. A. A. Purcell, to deliver a series of lantern lectures under its auspices on “Russia Re-visited.” The limelight turned by the whole capitalist press on the T.U.C. Delegation's visit to Russia has served as an excellent advertisement for these lectures. Very many I.W.C.Ers in out-of-the-way districts will be unable to hear Mr. Purcell speak; and we are therefore glad to be able to print the following extracts from his lecture—which, as will be seen, deals with other matters (nearer home) as well as Russia.

NEVER before has a Trade Union Delegation been the subject of such close attention and interest as the one which went to Russia in November, 1924. Since their return the delegates have been the special objects of a variety of criticism which has included innuendo, abuse, and kindly advice. The Delegation cannot, therefore, complain that it has not had what is called a “good Press.” It is now about to give its own version of the visit, and in such a form that it will be informative and instructive to the great mass of the working class, on whose behalf the visit was undertaken.

The Delegation went out with a working-class bias. Its report of what it saw will quite naturally, therefore, have a strong working-class flavour, just as a capitalist delegation would report capitalistically biased and anti-working class. The information gathered in the course of our travels has been placed in readable form and will, we

THE PLEBS

are certain, float comfortably over the rough seas which are being arranged for its passage.

One thing is certain, it will be a good deal more informative and instructive than the anti-Russian and anti-working-class propaganda of the last six months has been.

My special purpose here is to draw attention to the International Trade Union and working-class position as I see and understand it, and further, to urge a method by which we can the more readily bring into close co-operation the whole of the Trade Union Movements of the whole world. This is no new proposal. As far back as September 28th, 1864, there was founded in this country the International Working Men's Association, whose objects were :—

The protection, advancement and complete emancipation, economic and political, of the working class.

As a means to this great end it will promote the establishment of solidarity between the manifold divisions of labour in each country, and the co-operation of the working classes of the different countries.

Its organisation will assist in uniting the working class of all countries IN A PERPETUAL BOND OF FRATERNAL CO-OPERATION.

Britain is, therefore, the registered birthplace of the Workers' International. That was sixty years ago. To-day the need for international working-class solidarity is far greater. An I.W.M.A. address of that day cites a speech of W. E. Gladstone, in which he compared the wealth of Great Britain with the abject poverty of the British workers. Is there no poverty to-day? Wherever one goes, in all capitalist countries, there we find vast numbers of the workers subject to the most abject conditions of misery and degradation.

In Germany there can be no question as to the dangerous conditions now prevailing. In several other parts of Europe the conditions of the workers beggar description. In Bulgaria, Roumania and Hungary thousands of our fellow workers are rotting in prisons and internment camps. I need do no more than mention the name of Italy. As we stand in Britain to-day, if the British miners stop for the purpose of improving their terrible conditions, the international capitalist class mechanism comes immediately into operation by the exchange of French-German or German-French or American coal.

The grim tragedy of the miner's life in this country to-day is made still more grim by the fact that every time he endeavours to secure a living wage, the example of the German miner, who works from ten to twelve hours a day on lower wages than a British miner receives, is held up before him.

In India the conditions of millions of our fellow workers are

a profound disgrace to our so-called civilisation. Illiterate, ill-paid, badly clothed, frightfully housed and fed, they may, one day, sweep their Anglo-Indian masters from their midst and in their frenzy excite the teeming millions of the East into an anti-Western attack, the thought of which is sufficient to make the world shudder.

During the war we were told that it was a war to end war ; to-day we find militarism almost everywhere adding to its power. Competition in armaments is forbidden to the so-called conquered, whilst it flourishes more than ever amongst the alleged victors. Thus the danger of the workers being embroiled in deadly antagonism is as great as ever.

So long as militarism and capitalism retain their tremendous machinery of power, so long as the capitalist forces are able to set this machine in motion, so long will working men and women remain the victims of war. Therefore, the workers must organise specifically and universally in direct opposition to capitalism and its political methods. They must so organise their forces as to be able, when the war drum sounds, to silence it for ever. We have to declare openly that only militant and universal organisation of the working class can remove the war danger. The attitude and mentality of the workers must be such a one as cannot be duped by misrepresentation or misled by passion.

If we take stock of the International T.U. Movement, it is clear that things are extremely unsatisfactory. We have to face the fact that Holland is divided into six differing national federations ; France has three ; Czecho-Slovakia is divided into three sections ; Poland has two ; Germany appears so divided that it looks to us as if a working-class peace-maker would be a literal God-send.

Russia stands surrounded by several sections who favour militancy and energetic action, and Britain to-day appears in the position of one who is looked up to as a centre about which the various sections—Red, White, Yellow and Green—may be gathered for the purpose of hammering out the means which may bring us all to International Working-Class Unity.

History may repeat itself. Just as Britain witnessed, in 1864, the birth of the International Working Men's Association which, in the noble, challenging slogan of Marx, called upon the workers of all lands to unite, so to-day Britain may assist in the welding together of the world's workers into one well-knit, indestructible Trade Union International Organisation.

Europe industrially organised—Russia, Germany, Britain and France and the rest—is the first step towards the complete destruction of the war-lords, market-riggers, national and international reactionaries, racial and political strife promoters, in short all working-class exploiters.

Our patriotism must be that of loyalty, unshamed and unflinching, to *our class* the world over. For this reason I urge all to popularise the idea that without delay every effort must be put forth and supported to secure the inclusion of the Trade Union Movements of Russia, America and all other countries within the mosaic of international unity.

A. A. PURCELL.

PROPAGANDA and the LAW

Independent working-class education, precisely because it does not take many accepted facts and institutions for granted, is apt to be labelled "propaganda" by the apologists of Things As They Are. The following article is accordingly of special interest to I.W.C.Ers.

THERE is a widespread belief in England that all citizens are entitled to express opinions on every kind of public question on the platform or by writing without risk of prosecution, *provided* such opinions are not expressed in obscene or indecent language, and are free from incitements to violence. This view of the legal position is erroneous. No such liberty of expression is the right of British citizens under the Statute Law or the common law.

Acts of Parliament beginning with 1 Edward VI, render liable to severe penalties any person who should question the divine origin of the Bible, the divinity of Jesus Christ, or should use certain expressions in derogation of the Book of Common Prayer, or in relation to the administration of the Sacraments. For a prohibitionist to denounce the drinking of wine at the Holy Sacrament as a sin would be blasphemy. These Statutes have certainly not fallen into disuse; yet no enlightened mind has any belief in the divine origin of these persons, books, or ceremonies.

21 George III., c. 49, is a Statute to "prevent profanation of the Lord's Day," which forbids "public debating on any subject whatsoever upon any part of the Lord's Day called Sunday." By this Act any prosecution would be well-founded against the delivery of political lectures on Sunday, and the magistrates would be bound to convict, or treat the Statute as a dead letter.

There are also Statutes aimed at any general denunciation of the truth of the authorised doctrines of the Church of England, which are reinforced by Statutes against the use of obscene language and the printing of obscene publications. In practice, these Statutes are only used to ensure the prosecution of inconvenient books or pamphlets. The prosecution of the translator of M. Zola's novels

was launched under these Acts ; he was convicted and imprisoned. A prosecution is rarely instituted against the mass of vulgar literature of a fictional character which is devoid of literary or any other merit.

There are Statutes making all criticism of the powerful in the land such as the monarch, the judicial body, or the officers of state, in the exercise of their public functions, punishable as seditious libels or sedition. Writings calculated to bring the administration of justice into contempt, or holding up a judge to personal ridicule would come within the legal definition of seditious libel. The judges are further protected by the powers at common law and under Statute, whereby any person impugning their honesty, or mocking their dignity, can be proceeded against for contempt, as happened to the *Birmingham Post*, which was very uncivil on one occasion to Lord Darling.

The Crown is protected by a rampart of Statutes by which persons abusing the personal character of the monarch, criticising the morality of the succession, casting doubt on the chastity of the Queen, attempting to seduce certain officers of state from their duty, endeavouring to enter into marriage with persons of the blood royal without the monarch's assent, or even reflecting on the morality or decency of the late monarch, may be severely punished for committing treason, treason-felony, sedition, or seditious libel, or calumny of the royal character.

It is an offence to advocate the changing of the institutions or forms of government in England by means of violence ; but the advocacy of Republicanism is not illegal, *provided* it is not accompanied by any proposals for the overthrow of the existing monarchy, or deposition of the monarch.

Any writing calculated, in the opinion of a jury, to be defamatory of a person in the sense of holding him or her up to hatred, ridicule, or contempt is a libel ; but the defendant can repel any action by establishing that the words were true as a matter of fact. Where, however, a person is accused of a criminal offence in any publication, then the publisher or writer, or printer on a prosecution for criminal libel, must prove that the criminal offence was in fact committed, and that it was a matter of public interest to disclose the fact. If a man knows another has served a term of imprisonment, he is not entitled to reveal that information merely for the sake of gossip or tittle-tattle, but only from a sense of public duty.

By the Army Act and the Naval Discipline Act, and the regulations promulgated thereunder, anyone who seeks to seduce a soldier from the absolute obedience exacted by the military oath, or endeavours to undermine the unquestioning obedience demanded from a naval rating or marine, can be heavily punished. Any person

attempting to persuade a soldier from obeying orders in an industrial dispute, or inciting a soldier to take sides in such a dispute to create a revolution, would be guilty of a most serious offence under several Statutes.

Whether the mere advocacy of trade union principles in the Army, the Navy, or the Police Force is in itself an offence is an undecided question. Under the Police Act, it is an offence to ridicule the duties of the police, or to cast reflections upon the tasks they are ordered to carry out. Soldiers, sailors, or policemen who agitated in their various forces to secure the setting up of trade-union organisation as a method of redressing grievances would soon find themselves in difficulties under the Articles of War, the Naval Discipline Act, or the Police Regulations.

By the Aliens Act and the regulations thereunder, deportation orders can be issued against aliens for taking part in political agitation in this country without any trial in a court of justice. Under these regulations, the right of asylum for political refugees has been practically abolished, as the King's Bench Judges have decided that the Aliens Act conferred an absolute discretion, in this respect, on the Home Secretary, with which the judges could not interfere.

Under the Emergency Powers Act, 1920, the Government can secure from Parliament the power to declare "a state of emergency," or may do so through the Privy Council. Once a "state of emergency" is declared, the Government can direct regulations in suppression of freedom of speech, or writing, or movement of person, for a limited time. It is questionable, however, whether martial law could be instituted under this Act. In that respect it is different from the Defence of the Realm Acts, which conferred power on the Government to declare martial law.

Another remarkable power vested in the authorities is under a Statute of Richard II. whereby inconvenient persons may be convicted as "rogues and vagabonds," or "disorderly persons," and ordered to find sureties for their good behaviour, for a period up to twelve months. This power was used in the Suffrage agitation against Mr. George Lansbury, and against the police strikers, as in the Stoneham case in 1920.

The censorship of plays and dramatic performances is exercised by the Lord Chamberlain. It is invoked against the propaganda play of ideas rather than against the indecencies of the music halls, or the vulgar inanities and suggestiveness of the musical comedy. The Lord Chamberlain can maintain an absolute veto on any play regarded as dangerous to public morality in its outlook; but such a play may be presented by societies like the Incorporated Stage Society, the Play Actors, and cognate societies. The existence of these societies is the only check on the complete suppression of any

performance of fine dramatic work. There is also a censorship exercised upon film production, which operates much in the same manner, though under a different authority.

All printed publications must bear the imprint and address of the printer. This law is aimed at preventing secret printing of the kind required in revolutionary propaganda in times of public agitation. The provisions concerning registration of periodicals provide the authorities with powers which could be resorted to very harshly against unpopular or revolutionary journals ; but few attempts have been made in recent years by the postal authorities to utilise their authority in this respect : yet the weapon is there.

The Official Secrets Act is designed to prevent the unauthorised publication of official documents or papers of a secret character by Ministers and officials, or by persons into whose possession official papers may come on death, or by purchase, such as newspaper editors, historians, or biographical writers. It is a valuable protection to the existing order, which is safeguarded from disclosures of great propaganda or historical value, by the mere knowledge among editors and publishers of the existence of these suppressive powers. The most recent case in which the definite threat of this Act has been used concerned the proposed memoir of the late Roger Casement.

The last example of restriction on propaganda is the application of the law of libel as regards reflections on the character of dead persons. On this subject the law is in an unsettled state. No more mischievous phrase has ever been coined than the Latin tag for the words : " Of the dead, say nothing but good." The dead should not be the target of the slanderous, but the fair maxim should be : " Of the dead say nothing but the truth." There is nothing more contrary to the public advantage than beslaving dead rulers and statesmen with ridiculous encomiums of their non-existent virtues. It was Lord Granville who remarked that five of Queen Victoria's Prime Ministers had committed adultery : but mention of that fact would not be found in their biographies !

Reviewing these various prohibitions on the free discussion of questions of public importance, it is clear that the authorities have the means of suppressing any outspoken critic of any established institution under one or other of the laws on the Statute Book, the regulations made under Statutes, or by the common law. The pathway of criticism on most topics of public debate is strewn with traps, into which the most cautious of writers could easily stumble, as was shewn several times during the War. What is the remedy ? How can the Labour movement protect the honest and conscientious writer from the risk of governmental prosecution ? While this mass of repressive machinery can be set in motion against the critical or revolutionary-minded citizen, Freedom of Speech or Writing

can only be regarded as phrases of the liberal *bourgeoisie*. True liberty in these categories of mental activity can only exist when the faculties of the mind can be directed against the structure of government, and the moral and religious sanctions on which it reposes, without any fear of unpleasant consequences of fine or imprisonment befalling the writer, as the result of some cutting analysis of the existing order.

The Labour movement should take the earliest opportunity of impressing upon its political leaders the urgent need for removing these hindrances upon freedom of discussion. The Labour movement must deny any class monopoly in the right to know, and should instruct its leaders, on their next accession to office, to strip the Statute Book of these infringements upon liberty of thought, so instituting an era of real toleration. The most convenient method of achieving this end is by the introduction of an omnibus measure, which would give statutory warrant, in plain terms, to the principle of toleration in propaganda, even for those theories which are regarded as most subversive of the existing order of society. The terms of the new Toleration Bill might run somewhat on these lines : Be it enacted from and after the passing of this Bill that

(1) No person shall be proceeded against for having written, spoken, published or printed any words in defamation of the Constitution, the doctrines of the Established Church, the Houses of Parliament, the administration of justice, the public actions or conduct of the Royal Family ; or for having spoken, written, published, or printed any words subversive of discipline in H.M. Naval, Military, Air, or Police Forces.

(2) No person shall be proceeded against for the advocacy of trade union organisation in the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, or the Police Force.

(3) Where any official or person shall be prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act for having disclosed any information obtained in his official capacity, or communicated from an official source, no conviction shall be recorded where the jury is satisfied that such disclosure and/or communication was made in the honest belief of such official or person that it was in the public interest to make such disclosure and/or communication.

(4) The Lord Chamberlain shall cease to act as Censor of Plays from and after the passing of this Act ; and the presentation of dramatic works, music-hall performances, or film productions, shall be free from any licensing or censor authority of any kind.

(5) No person shall be proceeded against for not having placed upon any printed document that he or she may have written, printed, or published, any imprint stating the place of publication and/or the name of the printer.

(6) All publications shall be entitled to be registered as newspapers or periodicals where the said newspapers or periodicals are published periodically, and otherwise comply with the regulations as to format and size set out in the Post Office Handbook.

(7) No proceedings of any kind shall be instituted in respect of alleged defamatory statements concerning deceased persons.

(8) No alien, temporarily or permanently resident in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, shall be deported for any written or spoken criticism of a political or religious character directed against the Constitution of Great Britain, or of any other State.

(9) No proceedings shall be taken for blasphemy, nor in respect of the denial of the alleged divinity of any religious book and/or doctrine of any kind whatsoever.

(10) All Statutes and/or regulations issued under Statutes in conflict with, in contradiction of, or inconsistent with, the principles set out in the preceding sections of this Act are hereby repealed, and no proceedings of any kind shall be instituted thereunder.

With such a measure on the Statute Book, the right to discuss all beliefs and theories, however sacred and however profane, would have been established, and every citizen could speak and write freely on all those topics which are the proper concern of every conscientious member of the community.

C. H. NORMAN.

CAPITALISM TO-DAY

II.—TRUSTIFICATION: METHODS, CONSEQUENCES, AND EXCEPTIONS

BIG BUSINESS expands in various ways. When like joins up with like, e.g., when two distributive concerns or two colliery companies unite, that is a plain horizontal combination. More interesting are the attempts by vertical combination to control every raw material and process of a particular commodity. The Union Cold Storage has its own ranches, refrigerating plants and ships. Bovril also rears its own cattle in the Argentine. Harrods (capital £3,000,000) become manufacturers of hosiery. The Bethlehem Steel Works owns its own orefields and ships. Lever Bros. have obtained oil refineries and plantations for oil kernels. Baldwins, Ltd., having secured control of half the South Wales steel production, pushes into coal production, as do the Ebbw Vale Co., and Dorman Long's (as cited in the previous article).

Sometimes the producer starts to control distribution, e.g., a boot manufacturer starting a postal trade or shops. In other cases the distributor moves back to control production, e.g., a tea seller buys a tea plantation. Often amalgamation is concealed by the retention of the old names for the sake of the good will of customers. In other cases one company acquires shares instead of buying out completely; some companies are only holding companies formed for that purpose. Alternatively one company can be absorbed into another, or the new amalgamation may have an entirely new name.

The future history of the world will be largely determined by whether trusts become national or international. If international trusts grow, the chance of world war will be lessened, but if they are restricted to national groups, or even to the five World Groups, the approaching clash will be brought proportionately nearer.

The tobacco, explosives, soap, electrical machinery and meat industries were among those cited in which big international companies had arisen. In February, 1924, British Dyestuffs Corporation were linking up with a great German combine (*M.G. Commercial* 28-2-24). Quite recently the Marconi Co. pioneered the Commercial Radio International Committee which included similar companies to itself in the United States, France and Germany.

The League of Nations in the matter of the Austrian and Greek Loans has shown co-operation among the international financiers. The Dawes Report is another example of international action largely at the expense of the German section of the working class. However, it would be premature to imagine that future rivalry and wars will be avoided by agreement in plunder; such tempting stakes as China will probably induce even an overwhelmingly richer nation like the United States to play for her own hand. Moreover, in Great Britain there is much effort to foster *British* Trusts and make a ring fence around the *British* Empire against all outsiders.* The Federation of British Industries with its 2000 important firms directly affiliated and representing £5000 millions of capital is significant in this respect. If the Labour Party idea of State purchase and transport of foodstuffs from the Colonies is really adopted by Mr. Baldwin, it will be altered into assistance of British Trusts as against the American. Once one Trust is assisted, all the others will have the right to apply for a subsidy or tariff protection. Mr. Baldwin's decision to treat each industry on its merits means that various groups will exercise their "political pull."

*That a great deal of this is mere camouflage is proved by the recent failure of an Australian Government Loan (no less than 91 per cent. being left with underwriters) in comparison with the over-subscribed German and Greek Loans which afford higher rates of interest.

Some industries lend themselves to the growth of Big Business better than others. A railway company cannot operate like, say, a home-working tailor. The huge initial outlay, the compulsory size of the undertaking at once prevent it being carried on by one man or under domestic production. The very obvious benefits secured by the greater companies compared to the little man are :—

1. Building and machinery can be purchased on a greater scale and can be more economically used. This also applies to raw materials and the generation of driving power.

2. Waste products of industry are produced in such quantity as to make their treatment by applied chemistry profitable. To take one example : the small colliery company wastes its small steam coal, but the combine producing many tons of it can go to the expense of a by-product plant with great advantage. Applied chemistry is making great strides forward in this " utilisation of the excrements of production."

3. A great saving of labour is effected. Hobson quotes some very fine examples of this. The Whisky Trust, after its formation, got the same output from twelve distilleries as had previously come from the eighty running before. " When the American Steel and Wire Company was formed, the services of 200 salesmen were dispensed with ; one of the early economies of the Whisky Combine was the dismissal of 300 travellers." Similar instances, if less striking, can be observed, and the advantage of these economies is additional to those secured by monopoly prices.

The motto of capitalism has altered from Cromwell's days to " Trust in Combines and keep your prices high." The problem of prices becomes one of " what the traffic will bear." The Government Enquiry found that J. P. Coats had between 1913—1919 decreased their output 20 per cent. yet increased their profits by 80 per cent. The *eighth* millionaire of that firm has gone to where " moth and trust do not corrupt." The same Enquiry found out that petrol costing £7 10s. was sold for £23 10s. a ton. Cost of production and price may thus vary enormously and inversely. Among the firms we have mentioned above, the following dividends have recently been paid on capital watered and otherwise : Bovril 10½ per cent. ; Home and Colonial, 25 per cent. ; United Dairies 12½ per cent. According to Sir C. Fielding, the latter combine gets from 2d. to 2½d. a quart more than it could be supplied at by reasonable business men. The Calico Printers' Association in 1923 made a profit of £1,500,000, assisted by what the merchants called " exorbitant prices " for finishing goods.

Given Trusts fostered and maintained by tariffs, dumping becomes possible. An electric lamp sold in Great Britain at 12s. 6d. was being sold in Holland for 3s. in order to win a market there. Such

efforts, while increasing the cost of living in the home country, create bad international feeling, and tariff walls are built higher and higher in mutual hostility. Another supplementary cause of friction is the attempt to restrict supplies of a necessary raw material. The United States protested sharply against the restriction of rubber cultivation in British possessions, which is at the moment sending up rubber shares in anticipation of a 50 per cent. increase in the price of that article. Other examples will be found in documents listed in the February PLEBS and below.

But, despite these numerous examples, is the small business being swept away? During the War the "one-man business" occupied much time in the M.S.A. Tribunals. Duncan Carmichael (*D.H.*, 2-1-25), said that only one-eighth of the drug shops were owned by the Trusts and only about 3500 out of 55,000—60,000 shops in the meat trade. Even in petrol, during last summer some of the independents, through the Blue Bird Co., undercut the prices by 7d. a gallon (1s. 4d. against 1s. 11d.). The Traffic Combine in London has had to recognise the "pirate" bus companies. In building, the little man can still make a start. There are worker-shareholders in the mills of Lancashire, and the reactionary outlook of the Midlands and Birmingham is partly explained by the persistence of small men in the light iron and steel casting industry. Even abroad in agriculture, there has been a reaction from the big "bonanza" farm.

But upon a closer examination the independence is more nominal than real. If in distribution the small shopkeeper to some extent remains, "the proprietary article" limits his freedom considerably. The success of the Proprietary Article Traders' Association (310 firms producing 3000 patent medicines, foods and other articles) has encouraged a new body, the Grocers' Proprietary Articles Association, to start operation and therefore the shopkeeper can expect a greater control. If anxieties over bad debts and length of the working day are taken into account, in many cases, the profits of the shopkeeper are not higher than wages would be. He only remains because he is less costly to the Trust than a salaried manager would be. If he is caught selling under price his supplies are threatened. For example, in July last, the Imperial Tobacco Co. put such a pressure on some small retailers in London who had cut prices.

Even in commodities like yeast and vinegar the small grocer finds the Trust in control. A barber can start as his own master, but he has to buy his soap and razors and tobacco from the combines. The little working-tailor must procure his cloth and cotton from the Trusts and face the competition of the multiple shop. If the small farmer wishes to use manures he has to approach such a concern

as Brunner Mond. Often the Trust gets its grip in upon the transport of the commodity, as Rockefeller controlled oil by monopolising the pipe-lines. Or it may be the C.P.R. exploiting the farmer by high freightage rates.* The little men can grow the fruit and vegetables, catch the fish and shoulder the risks but, either in marketing or carrying their produce, Big Business takes a hand. To the extent that steel and cement and standard houses are adopted in building, to that extent will the big firms exclude the smaller. Some of the bus companies referred to will be quite ready to be bought out by the Traffic Combine, and in railway transport new companies are unthinkable. Against little men of the Midlands in the iron and steel trade it should be remembered that in 1918 one-fourth of the steel producers had more than three-quarters of the steel output in their hands; while one-fifth of the pig-iron concerns had over one-half of the total productive capacity of that industry under their control. The average capital of the 7964 concerns started in 1924 was £14,000, which indicates the growth of the starting capital.

Horizontally and vertically the capitalists are uniting, separating only to cry out against their penalisation by the high wages paid in some other section of industry. The little men remain only in exceptional cases, at the big concern's pleasure.

READING

Waste of Capitalism. (Labour Party, 1s. 6d.).

Outline of Economics. Chapter 10. (PLEBS).

MARK STARR.

SOME FACTS ABOUT RAILWAY FINANCE

In view of the railwaymen's recent demands and the aggressive attitude of the Railway Companies, the following article will be of special interest.

ONE of the most noteworthy features of railway finance has been the tremendous over-capitalisation of the railways. This can be roughly classified in four categories—(1) Preliminary Expenses, (2) Land, (3) Competition, (4) Nominal Additions. Preliminary Expenses consist of registration fees, surveyors' and accountants' fees, underwriting, advertisement of prospectus, and sometimes expense for promoting a bill.

*For dramatic presentation of such a struggle see Frank Norris' *The Octopus*.

(1) *Preliminary Expenses*

| LAW EXPENSES | | | | | | £ per mile |
|---------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|------------|
| London and Brighton | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 3,000 |
| Great Western | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1,000 |
| S.W. and Birmingham Railway | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 650 |
| Edinburgh and Peebles Railway | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 80 |

| PARLIAMENTARY EXPENSES | | | | | | £ per mile |
|---|----|----|----|----|----|------------|
| London and Blackwall Railway | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 14,414 |
| Manchester and Birmingham Railway | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 5,190 |
| London and Brighton Railway | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1,806 |

The burden of Preliminary Expenses alone is £90,000,000 and a modest rate of 4 per cent. interest upon this would require £3,600,000.

(2) *Land.* The railway companies had to pay much more for land than its market value warranted.

| LAND EXPENSES | | | | | | £ per mile |
|---------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|------------|
| London and Birmingham Railway | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 9,000 |
| London and Brighton Railway | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 8,000 |
| Midland Railway | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 7,000 |
| South Western Railway | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 4,000 |
| Edinburgh and Peebles Railway | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1,131 |

Lloyd George could say in 1908 that the landowners got from the railways ten times the real value of the land. Later he said : " Railway companies had often to pay fifty times its real value." Ninety-six million pounds was paid in excess of the value of the land, and this at the moderate rate of 4 per cent. would yield £3,840,000.

(3) *Competition.* Many of the old lines were built in direct competition with one another, and it was quite common for two or three railways to serve some obscure little town. This has been avoided to a certain degree by the grouping of railways, which Sir E. Geddes estimated would save about £20,000,000. Up to 1853 £70,000,000 had been spent in companies opposing one another, and by 1898 £290,000,000. Most of the expenditure resulting from this competition has been capitalised, and no attempt even in the recent amalgamations has been made to write this amount off. The total is estimated by one authority* at roughly £100,000,000 and this at 4 per cent. would yield £4,000,000.

(4) *Nominal Additions.* Stock that was earning good dividends was often priced up to half as much again as its nominal value. One example of this is a company called the Stock Conversion Co., which was formed in 1889 and bought up certain stocks of three railway companies, and against £600,000 Ordinary Caledonian

* See *Capital and Labour on Railways* (Labour Research Dept.) p. 16.

stock they issued (1) £600,000 first charge Preference stock at £87½ per cent. ; (2) £600,000 Deferred charge stock at £39. Consequently they increased a nominal amount of £600,000 to £1,200,000, and of course made their own little share out of it. Therefore in 1913 the capital of the railway companies was £200,000,000 greater, and by calculating how much is actually paid out in interest on these purely nominal additions (and this only by the larger companies) we arrive at the modest figure of £5,918,508, which must be earned by the actual remaining capital. Hartley Withers (by no means a Socialist) writes "the artificiality of the arrangement is shown by the fact that one company made no corresponding change in its assets, while another added over nine millions to them, though it need hardly be said that there had been no increase in their value. As long as assets in a balance sheet are dealt with in this pleasant imaginative fashion, the study of them may possess some academic interest, but gives no clue to the real position of the company that issues them."*

This is of tremendous importance to the railway workers. If profits are paid on assets which do not exist, and it is shown here under four categories, then the portion to be earned on those that do exist must be that much greater. There are only two positions open to the railway companies—either to charge higher fares and freightage or to keep wages at a low level.

All these different forms together make a grand total of £483,383,609 watered capital out of a total capital of £1,285,065,625 ; or 38 per cent. water representing no real assets, while 62 per cent. must earn the dividends to cover the total. Thus in 1913, out of a total paid in interest of £46,753,000, £17,569,865 was required to cover watered capital, and instead of a 5½ per cent. being shown, the average was 3.6 per cent.

During the war the railways were taken over by the Government, and were guaranteed the net traffic receipts of 1913, a record year. But still the companies demanded £130,000,000 compensation. The culmination of this agitation was a settlement of £60,000,000 to cover all claims, and the companies' reserves emerged from £17,500,000 in 1913 to £101,300,000 in 1920, and finally in 1922 £145,064,000, or 389 per cent. increase over 1913.

Railway shareholders have no need to worry, and many of the leading capitalist papers have been advising the shareholders not to sell their stock. The *Statist* said on January 24th, 1925 : "That no serious degree of anxiety is entertained by holders regarding dividend prospects is evidenced by the comparatively small amount of selling encountered of late. . . . So far as the coming declarations

* *Stocks and Shares.* Withers, p. 178.

are concerned, there would appear to be no reason for anxiety, seeing that the principal interim dividends were maintained at the 1923 level, notwithstanding the unfavourable traffic position at the end of the first six months of last year on the basis of 1923, the yields obtainable at present prices are generous :—

| Stock. | Last Div. % | Price. | Yield % |
|-------------------------|-------------|--------|---------|
| Gt. West. Ord. | 8 | 110 | £7 5 0 |
| L.M.S. Ord. | 7 | 100 | £7 0 0 |
| L.N.E. Ord. | 2½ | 31 | £8 2 0 |
| Southern Deferred | 3½ | 44 | £8 0 0 |

“Returns such as these were unthought of a few years ago, and they would doubtless prove very tempting in these days of search for high yields. Apart from labour conditions, prospects appear to be more favourable now that world politics have become more settled and the trade of the country is fairly on the way to convalescence. The industry itself, too, is rapidly assuming a more favourable position to take the fullest advantage of improving working conditions owing to the liberality with which repairs, renewals, extensions and other betterments are being provided for, following the period of semi-starvation imposed by the war.” Railwaymen! Think of those widows and orphan shareholders when making your unreasonable demands!

The *Observer* (15/2/25) said: “At present prices the junior railway stocks give a yield which can hardly be equalled on any similar security. The investor who looks at income rather than market movements will do well to ignore the present position and retain his investments. Substantial reserves remain. . . . Stockholders can look forward to another year or two of assistance from the reserve funds.” (Hear, hear.)

Conditions then are not too bad for the poor shareholders upon the admissions of their own press representatives, but that will not stop the press making a tremendous howl should the railwaymen force their demands. Then we shall be reminded frequently about the poor shareholder!

A. G. HILL.

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The TRADES UNION CONGRESS and WORKERS' EDUCATION : The Position To-day

I.W.C.Ers. will be glad to have the following statement, by the General Secretary of the N.C.L.C., as to the progress and scope of the negotiations with the General Council of the T.U.C.

TO follow the question of the Trade Union Congress and Workers' Education, the reader should first refer to the article on the subject which appeared in *The PLEBS* of July, 1924. That article carried the history of the matter up to the time when the General Council dissolved the old Joint Education Sub-Committee and formed a Trade Union Congress Educational Advisory Committee on which the N.C.L.C. has two representatives and the Labour College one.

This Committee, which is of a very considerable size in consequence of the fact that Unions having educational schemes are entitled to a representative each, met without any definite results. In order to get down to brass tacks, it was decided to appoint a sub-committee consisting of the representatives of the educational bodies only, whose duty it was to be to endeavour to draft some co-ordinated T.U.C. scheme.

When the sub-committee met, the W.E.A. representatives outlined machinery for a T.U.C. educational scheme which involved a very limited amount of joint working between themselves and the N.C.L.C. under T.U.C. Auspices. This scheme was, of course, to leave the two educational bodies intact, and otherwise independent. The N.C.L.C. representatives, however, pointed out that the question of machinery was of relatively little importance. What was of immediate importance was the question of *educational objects*, and until the objects of the T.U.C. scheme were clearly defined there could be no question of even the limited co-operation proposed. It was therefore left to the representatives to consult their respective Executives regarding the objects of the scheme, and several meetings have since been held with a view to this most vital of all questions being satisfactorily settled.

In addition, however, to their standing for the principle that

there should be no dubiety on the question of objects, the N.C.L.C. representatives felt that there could be no joint working unless steps were taken to see that the tutors employed under the Congress scheme were in sympathy with the aims of the Trade Union and Labour Movement, and that there should be a definite policy of training tutors of the right kind, and that as a general principle the tutors so trained should have had preliminary experience in industry as Trade Unionists. This condition has also involved a great deal of negotiation.

At the time of writing, the sub-committee has not come to an agreement on all the important points, and until the full Advisory Committee meeting takes place at the end of February it is not possible to say whether any agreed-on scheme will be recommended to the General Council.* So far as the N.C.L.C. Movement is concerned, if there is to be an agreed-on scheme it will leave the N.C.L.C. intact; will not in any way interfere with our legitimate propaganda; will not interfere with existing Trade Union educational schemes or future schemes; and will ensure that there is a distinct departure for the better in the W.E.A. educational policy. It may suit the W.E.A. to have an educational policy so questionable that a correspondent of the *Morning Post* (W. Parker, King's School House, Rochester), on 5th January, 1925, could write:—

“A Conservative by tradition, temperament and conviction, and a staunch supporter of the *Morning Post*, I am equally enthusiastic in my admiration of the W.E.A.”

Such a policy cannot suit the Trade Union Movement. If the W.E.A. is desirous of obtaining Trade Union support, they must very substantially alter their educational policy and practice. There can be no question of countenancing the policy they have recently pursued, namely, that of running with the Trade Union hares and hunting with the employing-class hounds.

The W.E.A. is well aware that the great bulk of recent Trade Union Schemes have gone to the N.C.L.C.; that some of the most important of the new N.C.L.C. schemes have come from Unions which have hitherto supported not the N.C.L.C. but the W.E.A. The real reason for that is that the Trade Unions, when deciding to spend their money on education, are very closely scrutinising the principles on which the educational bodies are based, and naturally in any such comparison there can be little enthusiasm amongst active Trade Unionists, when it comes to spending Trade Union money, for the educational policy of the W.E.A.

* In any case before the N.C.L.C. is definitely committed, all the constituent Trade Unions and Colleges will be consulted. We are, of course, quite definitely opposed to the *present* policy of the W.E.A.

It is true that within the last month or two the W.E.A.—W.E.T.U.C. has appointed a special Propaganda Committee to endeavour to get more Union schemes and to strengthen its weakening position in the Trade Union Movement. For this purpose a National Organiser has been appointed, conferences are being held, and leaflets supplied without stint. If the supporters of the Movement for Independent Working-Class Education realise the importance of the struggle now imminent, that campaign is not likely to have much effect, but let us not forget that if eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, unlimited energy is the price of victory! In other words, *we, too, must get a move on—each one of us must do his bit.*

If the negotiations for a Trade Union Congress educational scheme are unsuccessful, the responsibility will not lie with the N.C.L.C., which has always stood for Trade Union control of Workers' Education. The responsibility will lie with the Workers' Educational Association, firstly, because of its dependence on State funds, without which it would be a fraction of its present size, and, secondly, because of its failure to stand by the manifesto it issued, signed by a number of Trade Union Leaders, which advocated education "for the control of industry by the workers, in the interests of the workers."

J. P. M. MILLAR.

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An American Critic of Capitalist Society

The Vested Interests. By Thorstein Veblen (Allen & Unwin, 5s. net).

The Theory of the Leisure Class. By Thorstein Veblen (Allen & Unwin, 10s. 6d. net).

Absentee Ownership. By Thorstein Veblen (Allen & Unwin, 10s. 6d. net).

MR. THORSTEIN VEBLER, who was formerly a Professor of Economics at Chicago University, whether or not he is to be numbered among the precious circle of the Marxians, has certainly learned and imbibed much from Marx's writings. At the same time he is no mere doctrinaire with his eyes turned to the past and his fingers fidgeting with ancient scripts. He is thoroughly alive to the significance of the latest developments of capitalism in its most advanced form in the U.S.A.; and he is well versed in all the ways of company finance and modern business organisation. He is, as Mr. Hobson says in recommendation, a "most original and powerful critic of the established economic order." Accordingly, one opens with eager interest the three works now made available in an English edition.

Before one has read very far, however, two considerations strike one forcibly. First, the style, which has already drawn comment from certain English reviewers. This style is not, at any rate for an American writer, a bad one. When one has grasped the rhythm of its sonorous, well-rounded phrases, it has, indeed, something definitely pleasing about it. But there is no doubt that it is exceedingly ponderous. Perhaps it was a habit cultivated in his professorial days, so that sentiments which, if understood, would have earned him expulsion might be concealed from the comprehension of hard-headed Chicago business men. Moreover, one has at times a suspicion that he is

using a hatchet where a butter-knife would do. To those who have sharpened their teeth on *Das Kapital*, this heaviness should not be a serious deterrent. But, nevertheless, it detracts considerably from the merit of the books, at any rate as reading-matter for the impatient average student.

Second, Mr. Veblen's work constitutes not so much a complete description and analysis of the workings of modern capitalism, as a pleasant essay—after the manner of a Cole or a Tawney—sketching certain leading features of present-day society. Brilliant, suggestive, thought-provoking, iconoclastic, it certainly is; but thorough, scientific and satisfying it is not. He has a partiality for the general phrase rather than the concrete instance, and for vague classification rather than for clearly marked boundaries. We are given a sketch for a complete study, rather than the complete study itself.

Of the three books in question I like most the shortest of them—*The Vested Interests*. Here Mr. Veblen is at his best, perhaps because most concise; and it is here that we have the gist of his economic theory, laying down what may almost be said to be certain guiding lines for a development of Marxian theory to fit the conditions of modern monopoly capitalism.

In an earlier work, *The Theory of Business Enterprise*, we were introduced to his fundamental thesis. The capital valuation of a business is based on two types of assets—*angible* and *intangibile*. The former represents the actual plant, buildings, etc., the latter that elusive element, business "goodwill," which in fact represents all those conditions which enable the business to earn a profit. Hence the capitalisation of a business is governed by its anticipated power to earn a profit. It is in a sudden conflict between anticipated and actual profit-

making capacity under competitive conditions, showing itself in a general over-capitalism of business, that recurrent industrial crises consist.

In *The Vested Interests* this point is developed further. The major part of the capital of business on which dividends have to be paid represents these intangible assets; and the guiding motive of business becomes to earn a "reasonable profit" on this capital and so maintain its value. But the value of these intangible assets depends, not on the power of productive investments to produce wealth, but on the power to secure a surplus between selling price and costs. "Such income derives out of business relations rather than out of industry; it is derived from advantages of salesmanship, rather than from productive work; it represents no contribution to the output of goods and services, but only an effectual claim to a share in the 'annual dividend.'" It depends on the power to "charge what the traffic will bear" and to restrict output—in a word, on industrial "sabotage." And the extent of this "sabotage" Mr. Veblen estimates—on grounds which one must frankly admit to be very inadequate as stated—to the extent of more than 50 per cent. of the productive capacity of industry. Hence there is an inevitable conflict between the needs of industrial efficiency and the needs of business, between "the common man" and "those vested interests that live on this margin of intangible assets that represents capitalised withdrawal of efficiency."

This policy of the vested interests dominates, not only economic life but the foreign relations of nations, establishing the rule of the Divine Right of Nations, which means the Imperialistic right to plunder a weaker neighbour. "Self-determination being interpreted means the self-aggrandisement of each and several at the cost of the rest, by a reasonable use of force and fraud." So supreme has the business principle of sabotage become in our national and international life, that even the organisations of "the common man"—e.g., the A. F. of L.—seek salvation in the attempt to establish a little vested interest for themselves

In *Absentee Ownership* the thesis that industry is governed on the principle of business sabotage is given more general application. But the tale in a second telling grows somewhat tedious. Here we are introduced, after a rather "thin" historical account of the growth of business characteristics, to the New Order of Business, which matured in U.S.A. about the last decade of the nineteenth century. The features of this development are (a) the consolidation of the control of business, largely under the general ship of 'investment bankers' like J. P. Morgan, and (b) the clearer separation of business owners from industrial administrators, the former being of a passive and absentee character, and more exclusively concerned with business sabotage, as distinct from productive workmanship, than before. The Captain of Industry of an earlier day gives place to the Absentee Owner. Such business competition as remains takes the form, not of price-cutting, but of piling up costs of advertising and salesmanship, which still further restrict production and still further burden "the common man."

In *The Theory of the Leisure Class* we have a very able, original and interesting study of ideology. Here Mr. Veblen analyses the various ideological elements which exist in a class society, and explains their development in terms of the economic background. The starting-point of the standard of values peculiar to a class society he suggests to be the difference of attitude adopted towards "effort" and "exploit." The former is the mere work of the hands, the latter the exercise of power and achievements as seen in the warrior and the hunter—"the conversion to his own ends of energies previously directed to some other end by another agent"; and the former comes to be considered degrading and ignoble, the latter as worthy and honourable. "So tenaciously and with such nicety is this theoretical distinction between exploit and drudgery adhered to that in many hunting tribes the man must not bring home the game which he has killed, but must send his woman to perform that baser office." This ascription of honour to exploit is be-

cause "an honorific act is in the last analysis little if anything else than a recognised successful act of aggression; and where aggression means conflict with men and beasts, the activity which comes to be especially and primarily honourable is the assertion of the strong hand."

As a result, the growth of a leisure class, based on the right of "the strong hand" embodied in ownership, produces as the criterion of "honourable" and "worthy" conduct the display of complete separation from unworthy effort or drudgery—the work of the hands. Money is desired primarily as a means to display the honourable possession of leisure; and the use of money is governed by the desire to exhibit complete freedom from the need to work. This gives rise to the principle of *Conspicuous Leisure*—the cultivation of a system of manners and breeding, decorum and ceremonial observances which can only be cultivated by a leisured person. The "gentleman" is one who is possessed of such manners and breeding and decorum. ("A breach of faith may be condoned, but a breach of decorum cannot. 'Manners maketh man.'") Further, there results the principle of *Conspicuous Consumption*—the cultivation of the use of "the best in food, drink, narcotics, shelter, services, ornaments, apparel, weapons and accoutrements, amusements, amulets and idols and divinities." A gentleman's education becomes the cultivation of a nice discrimination between what is "good taste" and bad, the former being that which fulfils most closely the principle of *Conspicuous Consumption*.

A further feature of this ideology is the Higher Learning. The value of learning comes to be regarded, not in its utility to human life generally, but in its cultivation of the honourable characteristics of the leisure class.

Learning is valued by its recondite character—the accumulation of quotations from the classics and the pickings from ancient documents; and as in the old days of magic and priesthood "the recondite element in learning is still, as it has been in all ages, a very attractive and effective element for the purpose of impressing, or even imposing upon the unlearned." Hence the cultivation of the "humanities" and a "liberal (i.e., useless) education."

To such an extent do these leisure class ideals become by imitation the accepted standards of the non-leisured working-class of society, that the latter tend also to hold in honour "the real gentleman," and if any money comes their way themselves to try to imitate the "honourable" behaviour of their betters. Then further refinements take place in the standards of the leisure class; for, the latter, seeing some of their habits imitated by the mass of unworthy persons come to regard these doings as "vulgar," and introduce a new fashion which shall be safely beyond the reach of any but the worthy. The result is "an arrested spiritual development" and the continual conservation in character and social institutions of out-worn, useless and hampering relics of the past.

These books, or at least the first two of them, should certainly be read by all serious students. Primarily they should be read for their suggestive character; for they scarcely provide us with an analysis which is completely satisfactory or with a searching survey of actual facts. But seeing that our movement is poor in comprehensive studies of the features of twentieth century capitalism, and our habits of thought too often remain in the mould of the mid-nineteenth century, we should especially welcome these essays from across the Atlantic.

M. H. D.

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NOTES BY THE WAY

The Machine

THOSE who think that the Industrial Revolution ended in 1830 should read the following extract (lifted from the *O.B.U. Bulletin*, 31-7-24), from the United States Patent Office Report, 1924.

“The period from 1836 to 1893 saw more changes that profoundly affected civilisation, our mode of living, our health and progress, than any 1000 years previously.

“During these fifty-seven years an evolution of profound depth, of far-reaching effect, was produced. The steam engine was perfected and its application to machinery and transportation made effective and universal; the whole art of electrical generation of power, its transmission and utilisation was invented and applied; electrical lighting, heating and communication established; industrial chemistry became a force and a standard of industrial progress. Labour-saving machinery impressed itself for the first time generally as a universal factor in our industrial life, and the internal-combustion machine, with all its tremendously important implications, was developed and applied.

“The second period, from 1893 to 1911, although being considerably shorter, still produced such far-reaching inventions as the automobile, the aeroplane and wireless communication. During this period the inventions of the first period were consolidated, refined and more extensively applied, especially in quantity production by labour-saving devices, the use of electricity for power for machinery and transportation, and the perfection of the automobile.

“The period covered by the last thirteen years is notable mostly for generally intensive pursuit of improvements, particularly in the multiplying of the effectiveness of the labour-saving device, leading to automatic machinery, whereby direct application of manual labour is almost eliminated and production increased to an almost inconceivable extent.”

Painters will appreciate this cutting collected by *New Dawn* :—

“By means of a new painting and conveying unit recently installed in the Ford factories, automobile frames are cleaned, painted, and dried and delivered in a continuous stream to a car door for loading, at the rate of one every sixty seconds. This installation has resulted in a fifty per cent. saving in labour. By its use all handling by hand is eliminated from the time the frame is inspected after riveting until the painted frames are loaded on the freight cars. Before it is painted, the frame passes through a strong caustic solution for cleaning, and then through clean boiling water. Both liquids are in turn sprayed over the frames at pressures of thirty-five pounds per square inch.

“Then the frame goes to a drying section kept at 140 degrees Fahrenheit. Spraying with paint is done by fifteen sprays, the surplus paint finding its way back to the pump. Next the frame, still on a mechanical conveyor, passes through the drying oven, a distance of 500 feet. Automatically it then passes to the loading platform and is loaded by hand into a box car. One hour and fifteen minutes after the frame is placed on the first conveyor, it has been cleaned, painted, and dried. Five to twenty minutes later it is loaded on a car and shipped to the Ford assembly plant.”

Uncle Sam's Bulging Pockets

The rapid growth of wealth in the United States is shown in the following authoritative table (*Letter*, Dec., 1924, N.Y. City Bank) :

In Million Dollars.

| | 1922 | 1912 | 1890 | 1870 |
|----------------|---------|---------|--------|--------|
| United States | 320,803 | 186,299 | 65,037 | 30,066 |
| United Kingdom | 88,840 | 79,297 | 53,352 | 40,000 |
| France . . | 67,710 | 57,075 | 43,799 | 33,092 |
| Germany . | 35,700 | 77,783 | 49,500 | 38,000 |

Rubber Imperialism

The production and use of rubber has developed as quickly as oil, and it is now an important factor in the increasing importance of the tropics. The U.S. is not endowed with rubber as she is with oil. She is the greatest consumer because of her great need for motor tyres, and in 1923 imported 300,000 tons, as against 6100 tons imported into England. World production of rubber has increased by nearly eight times between 1900 and 1923; the figures being 53,890 and 410,000 tons. According to a writer in *Sennaciulo* (No. 13), 93 per cent. of that total comes from the East Indies under British control, and the remainder from the Dutch islands. The Americans are developing plantations in the Philippines and their government is subsidising rubber culture in other places. The potential rubber richness of Brazil is an additional prize to be struggled for against British capital.

Rubber prices have experienced some remarkable variations, and now prices are being forced up by a restriction of production. After 1912, rubber fell from 12s. to 1s. 3½d. in 1923, and Government assistance, by way of an export tax, is given to restrict the area of cultivation by 40 per cent. Americans accuse the British exporters of trebling prices, and thus obtaining by stealth a return of the interest paid to U.S. on the War Debt. The British retort is that the price of cotton has been forced up much more proportionately. Before the war 1 lb. of rubber equalled 4 lbs. of cotton; now 1 lb. of the former will not purchase 1 lb. of cotton.

So energy will be wasted in planting new rubber trees and permeating Brazil by the Americans; while public money will be used to subsidise the dividends of the Sudan Plantation Syndicate in order that Empire cotton may grow in the irrigated wastes.

If only we had attained to that World Group, how different it would be!

Students should note the series of six articles on "The Economics of Empire," which Walton Newbold is writing for *Forward*, commencing Feb. 21st or 28th. They should contain a good deal of useful material.

Advert

"Nobody has yet written a readable study of Marxian economics," declares Mrs. Barbara Wootton in the last issue of the *Highway*. Well, whether they manage to read it or not, a lot of people are buying *The PLEBS Outline of Economics*. The second edition printed last November is dwindling rapidly.

Moves in Moving

Land transport is being radically changed by the use of petrol. Over 60,000 more men are now employed in motor transport than on the railways.

In reply to our request for figures a month or two ago, a Scottish reader gives us the figures for machine-cut coal in Scotland—40 per cent. of the total output in 1922.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

M. M.—As there are a good many people in your position who are coming newly into the movement, some of them may too like to have a brief account of the organisation of the Plebs movement. There are two main bodies: (1) the Plebs League which publishes this magazine. This is a propagandist organisation, to spread Plebs principles and the idea of independent working-class education, by the magazine and otherwise, and to keep alive the real class outlook within our movement. The League is publisher—and writer!—to the movement, issuing in consultation with the N.C.L.C. two series (2s. 6d. and 6d.) of textbooks and various other things. (2) The National Council of Labour Colleges (N.C.L.C.) is the organic side of the movement. It was founded by the Plebs League as a Federation of existing small non-residential colleges. On it sit representatives of those unions, such as the A.U.B.T.W. which have educational schemes. It runs all classes, which the Plebs League has ceased to do. A remark should be made about one of its constituents, the London Labour College (once the "C.L.C.") This is the only residential college. It is controlled by the N.U.R. and the South Wales Miners. The I.W.C.E. movement has never had any control over it. . . . For a fuller account of the movement see next month's Special Plebs No. of *The PLEBS*.

THE PLEBS

LETTERS

CRITICISM OF "THE THIRD"

DEAR COMRADE,—Everyone will agree with Mr. Postgate when he comments on "the deplorable division of the two class-war parties" in Italy; but I, for one, completely fail to see how the unity of class-war parties in this country is assisted by the sneering tone which underlies all his references in the same article to the Communist International.

I can only hope that the Plebs League as a whole is (as most of its members that I have met are) more enlightened than the chairman of its Executive. And if so, do you think that you, as Editor, are fairly representing the League, when you allow slighting references to the Communist International, the great class-war organisation of the world, references which would be more fitting for the *Daily Mail* or the *New Leader*, to appear in PLEBS, professedly one of the leading class-war journals in this country?

Yours fraternally,

A. J. P. TAYLOR.

[What our correspondent calls "sneers" and "slighting references" we should prefer to call criticisms—direct, or implied. We do not subscribe to the doctrine that the Communist International is above criticism. It is a little amusing to note how the adherents of an organisation which demands—and makes full use of—the right to criticise every other section of the working-class movement are extraordinarily quick to resent any criticism directed against themselves or their heroes.—ED., PLEBS.]

WANTED, A MODERN HISTORY TEXTBOOK

DEAR COMRADE,—When are we going to get The PLEBS Textbook on Modern History? It is certainly needed. The *Imperialism* book is useful for the period 1870 onwards, but before that there is a vacant space which needs filling and which can't be filled elsewhere.

For instance, what is the Marxist explanation of the Italian Unity movement? I was turning over some old files of PLEBS recently and found a statement by a correspondent that

Loria in his *Economic Foundations of Society* sets out all the facts on this subject. But when I turn up Loria I find that he uses the stock Marxist phrases without producing very much in the way of evidence.

I had occasion to look at Lipson's *History of Modern Europe* recently, and knowing Lipson as an Economic Mediæval historian I hoped that he would throw light on the matter. But Lipson, like others, can see the economic factor working a few hundred years ago but loses it when he approaches his own time.

I think this shows the need for such an addition to our Textbook Series, and I am hoping it will soon be filled.

Yours fraternally,

H. E. MILLBANK.

[This letter is referred to in "The Bookshelf" this month.—ED.]

COTTON IN EGYPT

SIR,—In your "Geographical Footnote" about Egypt you state that cotton-growing was started there a century ago. This is incorrect. The Moslem Arabs conquered Egypt for Mohammedanism in the middle of the seventh century A.D. Within the course of the following hundred years these Moslem "barbarians" had already introduced the cotton plant into the valley of the Nile; few specimens, however, of cotton fabrics of that early period are in existence to-day.

Some five years ago in the organ of the textile workers I wrote an article on early Eastern fabrics and in the course of it dealt with this very point.

Yours, etc.,

MAZEPPA.

J. F. H. replies:—"I believe 'Mazeppa' is perfectly right. What I ought to have said was that irrigation, by modern methods, for cotton-growing was begun in Egypt a century ago."

ANTHROPOLOGY

DEAR EDITOR,—Looking recently through The PLEBS publication *What to Read*, I came across the suggestion

on p. 26 that students desiring to know something of Anthropology should consult Deniker's *Races of Man*. Allow me to say that this is not a good book for beginners; its sociological sections are fairly good but its chapters dealing with the physical side (anatomy, appearance, etc., of man), are not. W. Z. Ripley's *Races of Europe* is a much better book, although it is essentially a compendium of other investigators' opinions; moreover it includes a number of excellent maps illustrating various aspects of the subject. It is unfortunately expensive, but most Reference Libraries keep it. The matter is set out very clearly and in such a way that even a novice can follow the argument easily.

Yours faithfully,

A. P. L.

FRED HENDERSON'S "CASE FOR SOCIALISM"

DEAR COMRADE,—J. L. G. points out the inadequacies of Fred Henderson's *Case for Socialism*. But there is this difficulty. Apart from that booklet there exists no single general and concise statement of what Socialism is and means, which will appeal with any force to the many whose minds have remained untouched by any ideas except those of the elementary schools and the newspapers. The question "What is this Socialism of yours?" does not mean "I don't understand your argument (as opposed to some capitalist argument)." It means the questioner has no proper ideas at all about the rock-bottom relations of social life. Until he gets some such ideas, Plebs lectures and Labour College classes will be meaningless to him.

What is wanted is an elementary statement of Socialism, treating first of the very fact of existence as social existence; of kindred general notions—of government, politics and bread-winning—in the light of this fact; and of the capitalist system and its contradictions after it has been made clear that there is a system at all. In this respect, The PLEBS textbooks (necessarily) assume too much.

Some Pleb ought to tackle this job.

Yours fraternally,

H. G. R. KING.

To Speakers, Tutors, and Students

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

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

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

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

This is where the LABOUR RESEARCH DEPARTMENT comes in.

The L.R.D. is the workers' research organisation, owned and controlled by Labour organisations and their members.

It exists to collect and distribute the information which every worker who wants to educate himself or to work out a policy for the movement *must have*.

It answers the questions which the workers are asking to-day and prepares the answers to those which they will ask to-morrow.

And it publishes the only Labour journal of workers' research in the United Kingdom.

Every I.W.C.Er ought to be in the closest possible touch with the L.R.D., for Research is the essential hand-maid of Education.

The capitalists know this. Look at the thousands of pounds they give to endow University chairs of research.

Come and see the Labour Chair of Research. Look at the work we are doing, and see how you can help us to make it better. Or if you can't come

WRITE for samples and specimen copy of the *Monthly Circular* (free, to members only) from

The
LABOUR RESEARCH DEPARTMENT
162 Buckingham Palace Rd., London, S.W.1

REVIEWS

THE WORLD'S MR. SNODGRASS

Towards Trade Union Unity! A speech by G. Zinovieff (Communist Party, 2d.).

Mr. Snodgrass, in the *Pickwick Papers*, took off his coat very slowly, announcing in a loud voice that he was just going to begin. As he had anticipated, anxious friends prevented any drastic action. The officials of the Communist International have for years now been announcing that they were just going to begin. Let us hope that the unusual good sense shown in certain portions of this pamphlet is really evidence of an intention "to begin" to approach their task seriously, with a better understanding of the realities of West European, and particularly of British, conditions.

The proposition that Zinovieff puts forward is that it is the duty of revolutionaries to stay in and influence the trade unions, that they should never found rival unions, and never be driven out by anger at the behaviour of reformist officials. By all means! This is excellent advice. But what a lamentable comment on the international directors of Communism, that it is necessary to argue this thesis in 1925—and to conclude that the members are not yet prepared for it.

The advice is undoubtedly seriously meant, and the tone of the speech may be real evidence of a healthier appreciation of realities. The showers of abuse scattered by Zinovieff at intervals to Left and Right should not be taken too seriously. They are merely the unpleasant screen under which a Communist international official always retreats from an impossible position. The same device is used by a well-known Canadian animal.

To achieve this unity on an international scale, as demanded by Zinovieff, is by no means easy. It is only the British Left wing, which is duly abused in this pamphlet, that is at the moment taking any real steps towards it. The institution of the Red Inter-

national, and its early policy, have left deep scars which are ill to heal. Had its policy been what it should have been—that is, an attempt to unite ginger groups, vigilance committees, amalgamation committees and other revolutionary centres in a common policy—it might have done real work towards overhauling ineffective union machinery and putting the unions on the road to a real class-conscious policy.

Instead of that the Red International, or Profintern as it is unhappily named, committed the folly of a frontal attack on the Amsterdam International Federation of Trade Unions, in which it was hopelessly beaten. The shock of its attack split unions up and down the continent—fortunately for us, only one British union, the Fife Miners, has suffered a similar fate. Hardly any unions were detached whole. It never secured for itself enough strength to call a strike in a doss-house. It never seized the leadership from Amsterdam. Communist propaganda only weakened Amsterdam's membership and its hold on the loyalty of the rank and file so far, that when it *did* attempt to take any action, as for example the proposed boycott of Hungary, Horthy could laugh at it. And the Red International also repeated on a giant scale the mistake made in 1914 by the British building trade revolutionaries when they founded the B.W.I.U.—it drained the unions of their best elements and left the worst reactionary mandarins a free hand, which they have not failed to use. It is a relief to find that the dissolution of this body is being considered: it would be an aid to the Revolution.

One more phrase deserves quotation, though I cannot decide on its exact meaning. It suggests, at first sight, that Zinovieff himself is wondering whether the British Communist Party may not have to be written off as a failure. Here it is: "We do not know exactly whence the Communist Mass Party of England will come, whether only through the Stewart-

MacManus door, or through some other door. And it is entirely possible, comrades, that the Communist Mass Party may still appear through still another door—we cannot lose sight of that fact.”

R. W. P.

DAWES

The Dawes Report Exposed. By R. Page Arnot (Communist Party of Great Britain, ed.).

This is a useful little pamphlet giving in a popular form the salient features of the Dawes Plan. It begins by a short historical survey of the way in which the capitalist forces of the Allied countries have, since the war, attempted to solve the reparations problem. There is quite a good analysis of the social elements in France with their respective economic interests, which Poincaré astutely succeeded in uniting in the Ruhr occupation policy. This historical setting prepares the ground for the coming of the Anglo-American bankers in 1924, to pull the French bourgeoisie out of the financial mire and in return to secure from it a *prior lien* on the national assets of Germany.

The principal features of the Dawes Plan are then given in simple language and without too great an absorption in detail. Of particular importance may be mentioned the provision of the plan under which the new gold bank, set up by the international financiers to control the finances of Germany, shall be empowered to allow the reparations payments to accumulate in Germany. “By means of this money they will be able to regulate the whole of German economic life.” It is important to realise this, for it is clear that under the Dawes Plan the finance capitalists, that is those who deal simply in the buying and selling of credit, are getting control not only over the German workers but also over the German industrial capitalists. It is part of the world struggle between the war speculator and inflationist on the one hand and the currency stabiliser and bondholder on the other. The latter has recently gained another signal victory by bringing the £ sterling virtually back to the gold basis.

When Arnot gets on to the subject of political responsibility for the Dawes Report he is on more dangerous ground. He is right in condemning the clap-trap of many Labour speakers in this country, who hail the Dawes Plan as the coming of “Peace, Stabilisation and Security.” At the same time he makes no contribution to the question of what should have been the tactics of the Labour Government last summer, finding itself in office and faced with the demand of the bankers for the Dawes Plan. It is very easy to cry with utter disregard for immediate effects; “Smash the Dawes Plan,” but it does not prove that this intransigent policy would have rallied the workers in this country and in Germany. Instead of denunciations of the Labour Party leaders, it would have been better to have pointed out their failure to fight the general election of last autumn on the cry: “Fight the Dawes Plan by an economic alliance with Soviet Russia.” For, as Arnot points out in the closing lines of the pamphlet, an essential feature of the international situation at the present time is that “the capitalists would rather exploit the Russian market with goods produced from their German factories at exorbitant rates of profit.”

It is just the failure of the pamphlet to show how the Labour Party, through ignorance, did not make proper use of this international situation, that makes it a little disappointing. Everyone in the Labour movement knows now that the Dawes Plan is an attempt of the capitalists to stabilise Europe. The task of the immediate future is to find a means of making it plain to the masses in a way they will understand.

M. PHILIPS PRICE.

PRIMITIVE LABOUR

Primitive Labour, by L. H. Dudley Buxton (Methuen, 7s. 6d.).

We have got to revise our ideas, it is clear to me, about the validity of a rigid economic determinism in understanding the life of primitive man. Especially must this be the case when we are dealing with the time before

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private property in land arose, and before the appearance of a trading surplus. Men were scattered in more or less isolated communities over different parts of the earth, in widely-differing geographical and climatic environments. These directly conditioned the means they used in gaining a livelihood; there was no approximate uniformity in the ways they lived or the tools they used. Moreover, there was little or no change for almost geological epochs. Progress in the arts of life seem to have been brought about by natural changes in the environment, and there could have been no "inevitable" evolution in the technique of production leading to changes in social organisation and the balance of class power. The division of labour was at first rather between the sexes than between classes.

It is change in the balance of classes that are the stuff of history, and economic power in primitive races may have been only one of many sorts of power which led to a class configuration of society. Perhaps, indeed, it was with the priesthood, when inheritable property comes to be the reward of their function, even before the rise of a military class, that class distinctions originated. Only on the growth of a surplus and with the influence of change can economic superiority bring with it social preponderance. But with the growth of a communal surplus we are at the dawn of civilisation.

That these jottings are not more definite is due to the fact that this book does not discuss social arrangements or the organisational aspect of primitive labour. It is concerned only with a description of the various ways in which man got his living in different climatic zones and geographical areas. Within these limits it is very well done. It is simply written (sometimes almost too simply), and easily followed by the lay reader. The author is not afraid of conjectures, which add to its liveliness, and frequently criticises the popular Elliott-Smith school. The book leads one to hope that a fertile union may soon be effected between economic history and anthropology, which will throw fresh light on the social organisation of primitive races.

J. L. G.

BUILDERS AND BUILDING SCHEMES
The New Housing Handbook. By Richard Reiss (Prepared for the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association. P. S. King & Son, 2s. 6d.).

Captain Reiss, in this quite commendable little book gives a brief outline of the present housing situation; summarises the scope and purposes of the various Housing Acts up to the Wheatley Act—giving the Chamberlain Act, 1923, and the Wheatley Act, 1924, in full as appendixes; and fully outlines the general powers and duties of local authorities. He completely justifies the conclusion he draws that private enterprise has hopelessly failed so far as housing is concerned, will continue to fail, and that the local and national authorities must, perforce, shoulder the burden of the housing problem. Although he states that "every member of the public has a duty to perform in assisting and stimulating the local authorities to continuous and rapid action in order that the problem may be solved in our generation," he does not analyse the factors operating in society to-day which militate against, on the one hand, and make for, on the other, a solution of the housing problem.

Captain Reiss has no apparent idea of the class strata of society, of the power of the capitalist interests which check, depress, side-track, and either render cheap and nasty, or null and void, all attempts at adequately housing the people. He is under the fond illusion that because certain clauses outlining certain powers to local authorities are granted in various Acts of Parliament all we have to do is to talk about these certain powers long enough and the thing will be done.

If anybody really desires to obtain a ghastly picture of the contradictions and absurdities of capitalism he cannot do better than read this book, and *Housing* by Major Harry Barnes. The utterly ridiculous and wasteful folly of private enterprise, of those speculative builders who have ringed our industrial centres with rows and rows of bug-boxes—so long as it paid them—and then abandoned that, when the profits fell slack, to build equally attractive "villas" for the lower middle class, blissfully assuming, of course, that because working-class dwellings

were no longer a paying proposition the workers no longer existed, or, at all events, no longer needed housing—is made woefully plain. Then, many years afterwards, some worrying busybodies discover that vast numbers of our population do need houses, that the wicked workers have continued to exist and grow and multiply, and so the Governments have been induced to take a hand in the matter.

The "hand" of the Governments appear to have been about as effective as that of the speculative builders. Take the Governmental treatment of the building workers and its organisation of building labour as an example. Captain Reiss says: "One of the most tragic results of the shutting down of the housing programme by the Coalition Government during 1922 was that the available supply of labour which had been gradually mobilised on the housing schemes was dispersed. This produced unemployment in the building trade, led to the emigration of a number of skilled workers and to the transference of many men to other building work and other trades in the country.

Whereas in the summer of 1921 there were 80,000 skilled and over 60,000 unskilled men employed on housing schemes, by the end of 1922 there were less than 20,000 of each category." Is it any wonder, after that, that we organised building workers ask for guarantees? Is it any wonder that we want to know where we are when some cheerful idiot, with a bubble reputation as a building authority, comes along with grandiose schemes

of swamping building industry labour with thousands of dilutees?

GEO. HICKS.

WORLD SPEECH

Spoken Esperanto. Compiled and published by Norman W. Frost, Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A. (Or from B.L.E.S., 13, Dewsbury Road, London, N.W. 10. 2s. 6d.).

"Esperanto is the Latin of democracy," but let us not make the teaching a literary grind like the traditional method of instruction in classics. Much of the usefulness of the international language is experienced during congresses and fraternal visits, when living speech flies fast from tongue to tongue. *Spoken Esperanto* is intended for class teachers who wish to use the Direct method in the hope of making their pupils fluent speakers, not readers and writers only. Fifty detailed lessons are set out in the language itself, English being used only when absolutely necessary, and indications are given for 150 further lessons.

There is an interesting essay on the historical development of language and the qualities required for a world system at the present day. This sketch points out that mysticism and religious pseudo-philosophy were bred by symbolic writing such as the ancient Egyptian, which permitted abstract thought only by the use of metaphors and allusions to classical texts. Marxian students of this subject could follow up the reference to Card's *Chinese Philosophy*.

C. V.

The PLEBS Page

WE have received quite a lot of interested inquiries about our Summer Schools, and to those who are asking for fuller particulars and have sent a stamped envelope for reply, we have to say that as soon as these are known they will be communicated; but the "expedition" to Northern France involves a preliminary visit from one of the Committee, and until this visit has taken place very little further can be told than the date, August 8th to

15th, and the approximate cost, namely, £5 to £7. Comrades may rest assured that the cost will be kept as low as possible. In all probability the place chosen will be a village or small town in the vicinity of Havre or Boulogne. We hope to get into touch with some French comrades with a view to lectures, and ample time will be set aside for rambles and excursions. A day trip to Paris may also be in the programme. We have already booked two fluent French speakers so that no

one need worry about being stranded without an interpreter.

We have also had several letters recently about the formation of Plebs Groups, and these nearly all take the form of a request for advice and some idea of how to begin the organisation. These have been so numerous lately that it will be appropriate to make a few suggestions here, in the hope that they will be useful.

We have always tried to avoid being dictatorial about how a Plebs Group should function, for several reasons. It is obvious that local conditions vary so much that what might be useful in one part of the country would be useless—or a nuisance—in another. Then there is the fact that most Plebeians are actively engaged in the political and industrial movements in their districts, so that any arbitrary rule about the formation of a Plebs Group might become a hindrance to them in their other work. Nevertheless, the League can be very useful as a link between tutors, organisers, students and keen educationists, and therefore practically the only two things that we insist on is that each member pays the rs. membership fee per year directly to Head Office (whatever is arranged locally about finance), and that the local group when formed sticks to our Constitution and is, primarily, an educational organisation and not a political one.

I advise all secretaries and local enthusiasts who contemplate forming or re-organising a group to read carefully through the new Constitution. It will be seen that the "Methods" suggest several ideas for work. Take the first. "The support of the N.C.L.C. and the classes." All Groups should work closely in connection with their local Labour College. It is from the ranks of the students that the League should recruit its members. The League can be made the medium by which the students and the tutors keep in touch with each other after the class sessions are over. In this way much interest is kept alive that would die away. Then the second paragraph "The maintenance of the class-conscious character of the teaching in the present organs and institutions of independent working-class

education." Quite a number of groups have formed discussion circles at which they discuss each month the current magazine. May I suggest that these could be very helpful not only locally but to the Editor and the Executive Committee? The Plebs tries each month to give something valuable to the workers, something that will help them in their fight. If we know what you want, then we can do our best to supply it. Reports of such discussions might be very fruitful.

Again, in another direction, play readings can be made very attractive and can be used as propaganda. Quite a number of plays which are rarely, if ever, seen in the ordinary theatres, provide a good evening's entertainment if well and intelligently read. We ought to try to cater for the student in more ways than one, and there are many students who can be attracted to the classes and to serious study by some such bait as a well read play, or a good discussion.

Then, take the last paragraph, "The League is intended to link together members of the Labour Movement for the discussion and advancement of a revolutionary industrial and political movement suited to British conditions." There are numerous ways in which local groups can do this, among which are the organisation of conferences, lectures and discussions on current problems.

Above all use your group for "extraordinary propaganda." Try to interest the wives of the active men in your district, rope in the young people, get rid of the idea that we are "high-brow" or stodgy, for that idea exists. A friend wrote the other day "I was told that one must be an expert on Economics before *being allowed* to join the League." Stamp on that idea with both feet! Finally, brethren, in forming a Group remember that you must study your local conditions and find out what chance there is of success. We can't tell you what will be best to do. We can supply you with leaflets and membership forms, try to help you in difficulties that arise, but we can't send out detailed instructions of how to proceed. Some will have to try one way, some another. Talk it over amongst yourselves and let us know what you are doing.

EDINBURGH Plebs League members please note. A meeting will be held to re-organise the Edinburgh Plebs Group at one o'clock, 13, Abercrombie Place, after Comrade Woodburn's lecture on Sunday, March 15th.

Will everybody please note that we have got copies of Upton Sinclair's *Singing Jailbirds* on sale again—or rather we shall have by this is printed; we got the bill for them the other day!
W. H.

The NATIONAL COUNCIL of LABOUR COLLEGES

HEAD OFFICE—22 ELM ROW, EDINBURGH

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

ROTHESAY National Summer School.—Those who desire to attend are asked to send on the booking fee of 15s. immediately to the N.C.L.C., 22, Elm Row, Edinburgh. The charge for the week is £3 3s. od., but a reduction to £2 16s. od. may be made to those who have been actively assisting in the work of the organisation as tutors, college secretaries, etc.

W.E.A.—W.E.T.U.C.—In the article that appears in this issue dealing with the Trades Union Congress, there is reference made to the national campaign now being conducted by the W.E.A. in order to obtain further Trade Union support. This calls for greater activity on the part of our own people, and all our supporters are earnestly requested to lose no opportunity of getting their organisations to adopt N.C.L.C. schemes and of pointing out to working-class organisations that the fact that the W.E.A. gets very large grants from the State for its work, and at the same time is praised by the Capitalist Press generally, is a pretty good indication that there is something wrong with its educational policy, so far as the working-class movement is concerned.

Lantern Slides Department.—It is desired to add two further sets to those at present available, and Jack Hamilton, 11, Channell Road, Fairfield, Liverpool, who is in charge of this work, will be very greatly obliged for the loan of any suitable illustrations for lantern lectures on the History of Trade Unionism, the Evolution of Society and the Industrial Revolution. A special appeal is hereby made to all those who can help to send

on what they have available. The set of slides on the I.W.C.E. Movement has now been augmented and comprises 40 slides, price £3 per set, or 1s. 6d. each.

May Day.—The Local Colleges throughout the country could do a good deal to add to the effectiveness of some of the May Day Demonstrations. As an instance of what can be done, the following suggestions were submitted by the Edinburgh District Secretary, A. Woodburn, to the Local May Day Committee, and approved by it:—

The procession should show the Labour Movement as a whole but divided into three sections; the Political Parties in the first section to represent Agitation; the Labour College and the Socialist Sunday schools to represent Education; and the Trade Unions to represent Organisation.

In addition to the usual banners, each section might have at least one simple tableau, "John Bull" being suggested as a suitable subject for the Agitational section of the procession. The second section with the children from the Socialist Sunday schools could contain a tableau representing (a) Working-class Child Life as it is; and (b) as it might be; while the Labour College tableau might take the form of a number of blind-folded workers under the control of a figure intended to represent Governing-class Control of Working-class Thinking. The Organisational section might have as a tableau one showing four workers pulling against each other with a representative of Vested Interests looking on with

satisfaction, and a second tableau with the four workers pulling together successfully against Vested Interests. The last banner might take the form of an emotional appeal to those who are not inside the Trade Union and Labour Movement to come in and play their part.

"The N.C.L.C. and Its Work."—This booklet is now ready, price 2d. (postpaid 3d.) or 1s. 8d. per dozen (postage extra). The booklet contains a great deal more matter than its predecessor and is more calculated to appeal to the average Trade Unionist as a propaganda pamphlet. At the same time, it contains all the usual particulars of College Secretaries' names and addresses, names of full-time and voluntary tutors, etc., etc. No I.W.C.Er. should fail to get a copy and it would be well worth while pushing the pamphlet amongst those who are not at present acquainted with our work.

Training Centre.—Will all those who are inclined to take advantage of the Training Centre (in London in August) please write the N.C.L.C. immediately?

Scottish Trade Union Congress.—The A.U.B.T.W. and N.U.D.A.W. have sent forward resolutions for the forthcoming Scottish T.U. Congress in favour of I.W.C.E. and of N.C.L.C. schemes. Will all our supporters please do their utmost to get the maximum amount of support for those resolutions?

What the Divisions are doing

Div. 1.—At the monthly discussion meeting, A. J. Cook spoke on "The Crisis in the Mining Industry." London is at present running thirty-nine (39) classes—new ones being opened at Crayford, Richmond and Watford. Lectures on their Russian experiences have been given in various parts of London by Labour College students.

Div. 2.—Portsmouth Labour College has a very live class with fully thirty students. A week-end school has been arranged at Southampton with H. Wynn Cuthbert as Lecturer. *Reading:* Will any I.W.C.Ers. in Reading who are prepared to give assistance, please write to Divisional Organiser D. Wyndham Thomas, 35, Crescent Grove, South Side, Clapham Common, London, S.W. 4?

Div. 3.—As in other Divisions,

N. C. L. C. SUMMER SCHOOL

Rothsay (Scotland)

Whit Week

May 30th—June 6th

Terms for the week: £3/3-
Special reduction (to £2/16/-) for
tutors, organisers, secretaries, &c.

Series of Lectures on "Trade
Union Problems," by A. A.
Purcell, Geo. Hicks, A. J. Cook,
J. Jagger, W. H. Hutchinson, &c.

Write at once to J. P. M. Millar,
22 Elm Row, Edinburgh
enclosing booking fee of 15s.

arrangements are being made to take full advantage of the Purcell Tour.

Div. 4.—Extract from *New Leader*, 30th January, 1925, reporting an I.L.P. Divisional Conference in South Wales:—

"A significant decision was the unanimous acceptance of a resolution favouring affiliation to the N.C.L.C. Jenkins, a nineteen-year-old member of the Llanelly Young Socialist League, moved this resolution in the best statement I have heard for the Labour Colleges, and R. Neft persuasively seconded." Congratulations to all concerned.

Div. 5.—During February, J. T. Walton Newbold has visited Westbury, Newton Abbot, Plymouth, Barnstaple, Gloucester, Bath, Whitecroft and Bristol. The tour was a great success. Two new classes have been formed at Westbury and Bishopsworth.

Div. 6.—A new class is being arranged at Walsall. The demands for Mr. Purcell's services have been very much greater than the supply.

Div. 7.—Our very heartiest thanks are due to Steven Richardson, Labour Elective Auditor for the City of Leeds, who in his report for 1924 very

generously gave the N.C.L.C. a whole page advertisement.*

Div. 8.—Great Harwood has been following the useful practice of issuing very brief summaries of the lectures. Padiham has a new class for juveniles which is most successful, the attendance being 45. The Trades Council pays the whole of the expenses. Preston Labour College "kicked-off" for the second-half of the winter session with a reading of *Masses and Man, The Woman* being read by Mrs. Taylor. S.E. Lancs. Area is rightly proud of its 31 classes and 947 students for the months October to December, 1924. The support given by Trades Councils is most encouraging.

Div. 9.—Organiser Rees is putting in some good spade work in the Western Area of the Division. Windermere now boasts of an N.C.L.C. Class.

Div. 10.—Comrade D. Dick of the A.U.B.T.W. who has been Secretary of the Renfrew and Dumbarton District Committee has had to resign on the ground of ill-health. We hope, however, that it will not be long before he is once more able to take up active service. A special report drawn up for the Scottish Trades Union Congress giving particulars of the educational work done by the Labour Colleges in Scotland shows that the estimated number of classes for the year beginning 1st April, 1924 is 244 with 5,976 students. This is by far the biggest figure that Scotland has ever been able to report.

Div. 11.—The Belfast Trades Council has given its blessing to the work of the N.C.L.C.

Div. 12.—R. Holder gave a much appreciated address to the voluntary tutors of the Chesterfield College.

Directory.—Additions and Corrections.

- Div. 2.*—Eastleigh Class Group, Sec. :
A. E. Lewis, 25, St. Mary's Road, Bishopstoke, Eastleigh, Hants.
- " Newbury Class Group, Sec. :
S. J. Lovelock, 78, St. George's Avenue, Newbury, Berks.
- " Wolvercote (Oxon.) Class Group, Sec. : E. Belcher,

- Elm Thorpe, Wolvercote, Oxon.
- Div. 4.*—Ogmore Vale Labour College, Sec. : A. Wilkinson, 1, Bryn Terrace, Ogmore Vale, South Wales.
- " Newport and District Labour College, Sec. : G. Heap, 55, Corporation Road, Newport, Monmouth.
- " Gowerton Class Group, Sec. : E. P. Harris, 3, Church Road, Gowerton, Swansea.
- Div. 5.*—Cinderford Class Group, Sec. : A. Knight, 75, Tutnalls Lydney, Gloucester.
- " Lydney Class Group, Sec. : A. Knight, 75, Tutnalls, Lydney, Gloucester.
- " Frome Class Group, Sec. : L. Nelson, 3, Portland Road, Frome, Somerset.
- " Corsham Class Group, Sec. : R. H. Badminton, 2, Grove Villas, Corsham, Wilts.
- " Box Class Group, Sec. : A. Cogswell, High Street, Box, Wilts.
- " Trowbridge Class Group, Sec. : W. Harris, 42, West Street, Trowbridge, Wilts.
- " Westbury (Wilts) Class Group, Sec. : H. Smith, 32, Fore Street, Westbury, Wilts.
- " Newton Abbot Class Group, Sec. : W. Gameston, 32, Salisbury Road, Newton Abbot, Devon.
- " Bath Labour College, Sec. : G. Taylor, 27, Magdalen Avenue, Bath.
- " Swindon Labour College, Sec. : F. Lewis, 104, William Street, Swindon, Wilts.
- Div. 7.*—Dewsbury Labour College, Sec. : A. Hepworth, c/o Mrs. Blakley, 192, Council Yard, Earlsheaton, Dewsbury.
- " Hull Labour College, Sec. : T. E. Bryan, 91, Derringham Street, Hull.
- Div. 10.*—Dumbarton Labour College, Sec. : A. R. Stuart, Rossbank Place, Renton, Dumbarton.
- " Renfrew District Committee, Sec. : A. Maxwell, 19, Johnstone Street, Paisley.

* The PLEBS is also indebted in the same way to Com. Richardson—EDITOR.

The PLEBS Bookshelf

THE book of the month, for Left Wingers, is undoubtedly George Lansbury's *The Miracle of Fleet Street: The Story of the "Daily Herald."* The history of one's own times is always fascinating; and this record of events from 1911 to 1922, written as it is in G.L.'s own peculiarly informal, conversational style, recalls in a very vivid and intimate way one's own day-to-day impressions of people and events. It is the sort of sidelight on history which is so much more revealing than an official, "impartial" record. As a book, it is almost without form; but it is anything but void.

How far away those old days of 1912-14 seem now—the days of the daily Dyson cartoon, the weekly G.K.C. article, the Cole-and-Mellor collaborations, the Suffrage agitation, "Who the Devil's Bodkin?" the Insurance Acts, Marconis, the Dublin and London Dock Strikes, and Jim Larkin's "fiery cross"! What a gorgeous mixture of views the *Herald* of those days was! Feminism, Syndicalism, State Socialism, Belloc-Distributivism—everybody had his (or her) say; everybody, that is, bar those in authority. With what superior smiles those of us who were strong on theoretical correctness sighed over its substitution of emotionalism for philosophic logic; and yet . . . how gladly would we not have it back again in exchange for the official organ of a Party! For, though George Lansbury in this book does not exactly emphasise this point, he and we all know full well that on the day when the official Labour Movement took over the *Herald*, the old *Herald* died and the *Daily Citizen*, which all true Heraldites scorned, rose again from the dead. What the old *Herald* had—and what an official organ never can have—was a personal, human note; and it had also—what an official organ ought, but sometimes fails, to have—a real, unmistakable working-class consciousness.

There must be official organs; and it is pretty obvious that in this country only a body commanding the funds which an official organisation can command can successfully run a daily paper. But unofficial "minority" organs, as we have had good reason to realise during the past year or two, are also needed; just as unofficial "reform" and "minority" movements are vitally necessary within all big industrial or political organisations. It is good news, therefore, that the old *Herald* is to rise again; for that, one hopes, is what the announcement of George Lansbury's resignation from the *Daily Herald* and the publication of a new journal, *Lansbury's Labour Weekly*, means. By the time these words are in print Number One of the new weekly will have appeared, and we shall all have some idea of the kind of journal it is setting out to be. What one hopes of it is that it will aim at giving expression to all shades of Left Wing opinion, and so help to mould and consolidate a general Left Wing policy, not by dictation and "discipline," but by discussion and agreement. (I hope the *Sunday Worker*—to which, also, all success!—is going to do similar work; but its effectiveness in this direction will obviously depend on the extent to which it actually lives up to its preliminary promises, and takes pains to avoid becoming, primarily, a Party organ.)

I do not agree with those who regret the establishment of a Left Wing journal under the control of a single individual and the use of that individual's name in the title of the paper. Some of us have gone on repeating the perfectly true statement that the Great Man Theory of history is all wrong for so long that we tend to forget the equally true fact that individuals do count. Personality counts. In our own immediate circle of interests we know it does. We know for example that, be the teaching never so "correct," a class will not succeed

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 N.C.L.C., 22, Elm Row, EDINBURGH.

unless the personality of the teacher is of the right kind. The old *Herald*, to a far greater extent than he himself realises, was a reflection of George Lansbury's personality. Perhaps his most valuable characteristic is his faculty of gaining the trust and loyalty of men of the most diverse schools of thought. He is a born Left Wing leader; first, because his reliance on intuitions rather than on theories makes him perfectly tolerant of all sorts of theorists; second, because his own directness and single-mindedness do actually fuse the views of different groups into some sort of unity, at least in action. I'm not hailing G.L. as the long-awaited Messiah. All the same, I do think his re-entry into independent Left Wing Labour journalism may prove to be an event of very far-reaching importance in British working-class history.

"T.A.J.'s" review, in the *Daily Herald* of Feb. 4th, of Newnes' latest publication, *The World's Library of Best Books*, sets an example which I for one should like to see followed. He wrote, you may remember, two "opposite and mutually destructive" reviews, labelled them A and B, and "left the reader to take his choice"; declaring that he believed both of them to be "true and just in letter and in spirit." And both *were* true and just, etc., etc., though A was Admiring and B was Blasphemous. There are whole piles of books of which it is impossible to say, briefly and unequivocally, that they are good or bad. Everything depends on the point of view from which one regards them, and it would be much more effective to imitate "T. A. J." and write two parallel reviews, leaving the reader to decide what was—for him—the right one, than it is to try and reconcile two different points of view, each right so far as it goes, in a single short notice. I commend the "T. A. J." formula to the notice of PLEBS reviewers.

As announced on another page we are re-issuing, on the 18th of this month, Mark Starr's *A Worker Looks at History*. The new edition has been extensively revised by the author, and the number of chapters reduced in order to bring the book more into

line with the need of the classes for an elementary textbook of British Industrial History. We decided, after discussion, to re-issue the book under its original title, and in a slightly distinctive format to our Textbook Series, not because we do not regard the book primarily as a textbook—and an excellent one for beginners—but because its original title and its more colloquial style make it a book which also attracts the interest of individual readers who have not yet reached the stage at which they can pick up anything labelled "textbook" without qualms. We have a two-fold problem to face in our publishing work—the provision of textbooks for students, and of simpler, easier outlines for new-comers. Starr's is an admirable elementary introduction to the working-class viewpoint in history. Its greatest virtue is that its author was himself very young when he wrote it, and could therefore do easily and naturally what becomes more and more difficult as one grows older as a teacher: viz., keep in touch with the difficulties and bewilderments of the beginner.

The new edition is being hurried through the press as quickly as possible in response to an urgent demand from several classes; and we hope that Plebs everywhere will do their utmost to help in securing a big and immediate sale for the book.

A writer in our correspondence columns this month raises—again—the matter of the urgent need of History Textbooks; and Plebs are entitled to know exactly what we are doing in this direction. We hope to include in our Textbook Series, and to publish this autumn, two volumes: the first, *An Economic History and Geography of Great Britain*, with many maps; the second, a *History of the Working-Class Movement in Britain*, from the middle of the eighteenth century to the present day. Both these books are actually "on the stocks." But (once more!) Plebs are urged to remember that all our authors are folk with their living to earn and, further, that they are most of them, to a greater or less extent, also involved in getting out

the magazine month by month; and, therefore, that the time they can devote to the writing of textbooks is always liable to be interrupted in various ways. Another book which a Pleb has in hand is a history of nineteenth century Europe—precisely the sort of book which Comrade Millbank is asking for. Whether this is issued in our Textbook Series or not depends, in part, on the length of the book when completed; but at any rate we are out to do what we can to facilitate its early publication. . . . In addition to the above, sundry new "Sixpennies" are under way; but I had better postpone particulars of these until a little later.

J. F. H.

MARKED PASSAGES

The Need of the Moment

The need of the moment is that the success of Capitalism should be made more generally understood, and that among the rank and file of Conservatives throughout the country there should be a whole-hearted enthusiasm to carry on the work of education, applying commonsense and sympathy to the evils which still exist.

It is, above all, necessary to convince the nation of the folly of uprooting the only economic system which can provide the sinews of war for making away with slums, caring for the sick, and educating the ignorant, and making life happier for the average man and woman.

London Daily Telegraph.

"Sovietism" in France twenty years Ago

The peasants replied to this sophistry . . . by calling upon their Deputies to resign. Laferre neglected to do so. He was too greatly occupied with his opportunity. He went down to "address his constituents." They chased him for miles. And in that exhilarating episode it was apparent that the peasants of the Ande had

discovered in their simple fashion both where the representative system was at fault and by what methods it may be remedied.

H. BELLOC, *On Something* (1910).

Contributors Please Note

Whatever—Deep or Shallow, New or Old—

Is clearly Thought, can be as clearly Told.

The Colt must mind the Bit, the Nail the Hammer;
And even Kings obey the Laws of Grammar.

Be This or That, when Things are said or done.

Both Rain and Snow have friends, but Slush has none.

ARTHUR GUITERMAN,
A Poet's Proverbs.

WHY NOT?

The plain man is not musical, but he listens to Sir Henry Wood. There are Promenade Concerts; why not Promenade Economics?

JAS. AGATE, *Blessed Are The Rich.*

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¶ The League supports the National Council of Labour Colleges, and it exists to carry on propaganda among Trade Unions and other workers' organisations for the adoption of new schemes of

INDEPENDENT WORKING- CLASS EDUCATION

or the extension of existing schemes.

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