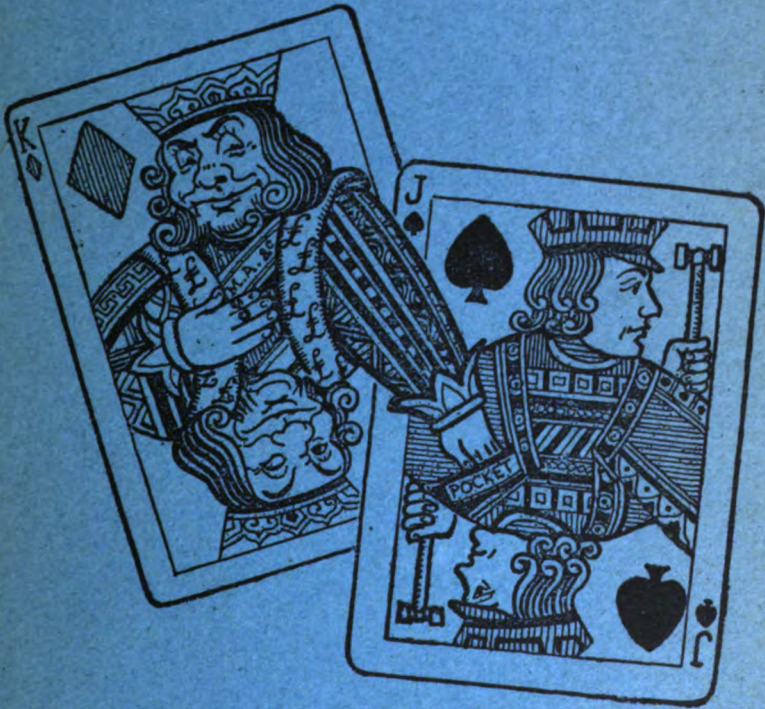


The February 1926

# PLEBS

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He understood that the older Universities taught men to "play the game." He had tried to discover *what* game. So far as he could find out it was "Beggars my Neighbour."

*James Maxton, M.P.*

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# THE PLEBS

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## The PLEB POINT of VIEW

WE dealt at some length in our December issue with the controversy which had been going on in the columns of *Education* (the organ of the Association of Education Committees), the *Times*, and other journals as to the precise implications of the T.U.C. Educational Scheme. Our readers will remember that the editor of *Education* called the attention of Local Education Authorities to the fact that the declared aim of the Scheme was "education for social and industrial emancipation," and asked in effect whether those Authorities were prepared to grant State aid to education carried on for "political ends." Certain representatives of the W.E.A. at once wrote in to state that the W.E.A. reserved the right to put their own interpretation on the objects of the Scheme, and in any case "would not for a moment agree that the T.U.C. had declared for 'Education against Capitalism.'"

Now, apparently, all W.E.A.ers are by no means agreed about this. And the Edinburgh Branch—one of the largest branches in the country—has just seceded from the W.E.A. because it "interprets" the Scheme in precisely the way that we ourselves do (i.e., as declaring for "Education against Capitalism"); and since it believes in "impartiality" and all the other old W.E.A. slogans—and needs University grants—it has made it clear that it will have nothing whatever to do with the T.U.C. Scheme.

The body appointed as the ultimate court of arbitration on any questions arising out of the Scheme is the General Council itself; and we repeat here what we urged in December 1921 or 1925? that the time would appear opportune for a statement by the General Council—and not merely by individual members of it—of its own interpretation of the aims of the Scheme. Are those aims "political"—in the sense that they are directed frankly to working-class ends? Or is the T.U.C. out for "non-partisan" education, carried on under governing-class supervision?

The need for a plain statement is made all the more urgent by an article contributed to the January *Highway* (organ of the W.E.A.) by Mr. Arthur Pugh, on "The W.E.T.U.C. and Workers' Education." Mr. Pugh is the Chairman of the W.E.T.U.C., the department of the W.E.A. created to carry through an educational scheme for the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation. But he is also Chairman of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress, so that his words necessarily carry special weight. After describing the aims and

origins of the W.E.T.U.C., Mr. Pugh refers to the preparation by it in 1920 of a Report on the Education of Trade Unionists, and the subsequent adoption of that Report by the Cardiff Congress in 1921. He does not allude to subsequent events—to the formation of an Education Sub-Committee of the General Council, the preparation by it of a Scheme, and the adoption of that Scheme by Congress in 1925.

Instead, he has this single sentence :—

Unfortunately, favourable as the position is, in so far as regards an increasing interest on the part of Trade Unions, the educational movement is being obstructed and delayed by factors which may necessitate the General Council definitely taking its educational work in hand in its own way, and *co-operating only with such educational bodies as accept without equivocation the educational policy approved by Congress in 1921.* (Our italics.)

Now that sentence is a little vague at certain points—what, for instance, are the “factors” which are “obstructing and delaying?”—surely Mr. Pugh is not referring to the Edinburgh W.E.A. Branch? But in other respects its meaning is crystal clear. It means that Mr. Pugh wants to substitute the 1921 scheme for the 1925 scheme. Why? *Because in the former, drawn up under W.E.A. auspices, there was nothing about “education for social and industrial emancipation.”* Instead, there was a very definite phrase about “utilising the services of Universities.”

We want just to say—and we believe we shall be speaking not merely for the whole of the N.C.L.C. movement, but for all the Unions which, after due deliberation, have definitely given their support to that movement—that any attempt to go back on the educational policy approved by Congress in 1925 will be a far more serious attempt at “obstructing and delaying” the progress of the working-class educational movement than anything that Mr. Pugh can point to so far. We urge all our readers to watch developments, and to see that Trade Unionists generally understand the principles at stake.

The alarm created in the capitalist press over the decisions of the Teachers' Labour League at its Conference on December 29th was significant. It was decided to combat Imperialist *Class-conscious Teachers* teaching in the schools, to propagate unity and Socialism amongst the rival teachers' unions, and—despite the Communist bogey—to affiliate with the Education Workers' International as the only existing international

of progressive teachers. Too much must not be expected, for the 1000 teachers in the T.L.L. are overweighted in the unions themselves by the usual university and college product—the human gramophone who consciously or unconsciously runs off only such little pieces of knowledge as are warranted not dangerous to capitalism. Both the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress are too advanced for the National Union of Teachers. And in the past, while individual school teachers have done excellent general propaganda work, their union has slumbered on and even financially supported a Conservative M.P. Many of the members of the T.L.L. will undoubtedly be victimised by reactionary Education Authorities who will allow no interference with capitalist class education. But no matter what the difficulties, our movement both locally and nationally must give every assistance to the work undertaken. The PLEBS has never denied the importance of juvenile education, but it had to begin with adults—to educate the educators. We know that many school teachers have already found our textbooks very valuable in combatting jingo-patriot history and have, without blowing trumpets, given their students true pictures of events. Labour councillors on Education Authorities who have been through our classes will naturally be able and willing to help the T.L.L. in its work. Meanwhile, and especially where Education Authorities are hopeless, our teacher comrades will increasingly assist the Labour College movement. The ideal school can only exist in the Ideal Society. The real teacher will take his place in the firing line of the battle for a social change.

We do not feel that The PLEBS is the place, at this juncture at all events, to discuss certain differences which have arisen among some of us anxious to assist in the development of a militant Left Wing in the working-class movement. But we may be permitted to make this appeal to I.W.C.E.ers :—Whatever our differences, don't let us permit them to affect our work for the I.W.C.E. movement, or for The PLEBS. We can surely believe in one another's sincerity and honesty of purpose, even if we differ materially on points of policy. And the names of the new Plebs Executive (see p. 80) are sufficient indication that in our educational movement, now as heretofore, people who do so differ can still work enthusiastically together.

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**DO ALL YOUR PALS KNOW "THE PLEBS" ?  
IF SO, GIVE YOURSELF A REST.  
IF NOT, GIVE US AN INTRODUCTION !**

# EDUCATION in SOVIET RUSSIA

## Two Sketches from Life

*Scott Nearing, who has just returned from a tour in Russia, has written a study of the Soviet educational system, a special PLEBS edition of which we hope to publish shortly. These two short sketches give an idea of the book's interest.*

### I

#### THE INSTITUTE FOR RED PROFESSORS

**M**ORE interesting, in many ways, than any of the other higher technical schools that I saw in the Soviet Union was the Institute for Red Professors, in Moscow. In this school the university teachers of economics, philosophy and political science receive their training. It corresponds to a graduate school in an American university.

Each student who is a candidate for admission to this school presents a thesis on some problem in social science or philosophy. This year some of the topics were: "Marx and Ricardo"; "American-English Diplomatic Relations"; "Influence of Foreign Capital in Russia," and the like. If the thesis is accepted the student is permitted to take four examinations: political economy, philosophy, history of the West, and Russian history. These examinations successfully passed, and the student is ready for his three years' course in the school.

When I reached this school, the Secretary, Maria Dodonova, asked me to take a seat. In a few moments a young man came in. She introduced him as the Chairman of the Students' Pedagogical Committee. "He will answer your questions," said she.

We three sat together, I asking, the student answering, and occasionally referring to the Secretary for details. Students are generally members of the Communist Party, he told me. All are expected to have two foreign languages.

Work in this school is divided into six groups: political economy, philosophy, Russian history, history of the West, jurisprudence, and co-operation. Students pick the groups in which they wish to work, and are expected to do two pieces of research per year during the first two years. In the third year they prepare a thesis which is published.

All work is done in seminars. There are twelve such seminars in

the first year class, twelve in the second year class, and six in the third year class. Each seminar has the right to select its own teacher. This teacher may or may not be on the regular faculty. This year one student seminar wished to study the Social Democratic Party of Germany. There was no member of the regular faculty who was an authority on this subject, so the students called in a man from outside the school. In such cases, the administrative board of the school must pass the qualifications of the desired teacher.

Seminars are small. Themes are typed and distributed in advance of the session at which they are to be presented. All are specialised and technical. For example, a student who decides to work in the economics group, must cover during his first year the theory of wealth and distribution, and the history of political economy; during his second year, money and credit and markets and crises. A thesis theme must be selected for his third year's work.

Each year about 30 per cent of the graduating class is picked by the student organisations, confirmed by the school administration, and sent for a year of study in some western country. During this year, all expenses are paid by the school. All students, during their residence in the school, receive 130 roubles per month.

Each student is therefore in the pay of the school. During his school course, as a part of his work, he must: (1) Teach workers in a factory for at least four hours per week during the whole three years. This keeps him in touch with the labour movement. (2) Teach, during his first year, not less than six hours per week in some elementary school, factory school or "rabfac." This provides his training in pedagogy. (3) The second and third years he must teach in higher schools and universities. This gives him his contact with the higher educational work of the Republic.

All students belong, of course, to the Education Workers' Union. They are also organised administratively and pedagogically. Each of the thirty seminars has a secretary, and these secretaries, with one of their number selected as chairman, make up the student administrative body of the school. Students in each of the six general courses (political economy, Russian history, etc.) select a decan. The six decans, with one of their number selected as chairman, make up the student pedagogical body of the school.

All course outlines and proposals go first to this student pedagogical body. If they are acceptable, they are passed on to the school administrative body for approval. Pedagogical proposals from faculty members or students must first secure the endorsement of this body, however. The school administrative committee consists of the director, the secretary, three teachers and two students (the chairmen of the administrative and pedagogical student committees).



You may easily believe that a person familiar with the organisation of graduate schools in American universities would open his eyes in wonder at such an institution. The matter is easily explainable, however. First, the whole Soviet educational system is on a foundation of administrative and pedagogical self-government. Second, some of the strongest of the younger men are taking technical work in these higher institutions, and it is their wish that they should learn to carry responsibility. The man who had been relating these facts to me in such careful detail was perhaps thirty years of age. He was chairman of the student pedagogical group, and he knew his business thoroughly.

"Tell me," I asked, "how you got into this institution."

"From the army," said he. "Eighty per cent. of the students now in the school were in the army during the Civil War."

"How did you get into the army?"

"I was a student of history when the war broke out. After the Revolution, for three years, I was a political representative of the Communist Party in the army. Then the Civil War came, and I went into active service."

"How did you come to leave the army?" I asked.

"My interests do not lie in the field of military operations," he replied. "As soon as the Civil War was over I got leave of absence and came here."

"What was your position in the army?"

"A commandant," he answered. That term is used for all Soviet officers above the rank of colonel.

"How many men did you command?"

"Thirty-six thousand," he said quite simply.

"Then you were a brigadier-general, or something of the sort."

"I do not know," he said. "We do not have those distinctions in the Red Army."

"And now you are studying to be a teacher of economics?"

"Exactly. That is where my real interest lies."

He shook hands and went about his business. I took my leave of the secretary, and came away realising that when brigadier-generals are students in pedagogical institutions the standards of institutional life may well be raised.

## II.—THE "RABFACS"

**R**ABFACS are higher technical schools designed to take care of students who come directly from the factory and who have had no adequate educational preparation for higher technical work. They were created to meet an emergency. They will probably disappear as the emergency passes.

Students in rabfacs are mature people. All of them have worked for their living. Many rabfacs refuse to accept students who have not done at least three years of work in industry.

Rabfacs operate on varying bases. In some of them the students do all of their school work by day. In others, the students continue on their jobs by day and attend rabfac classes in the late afternoon and evening. Some of the rabfacs combine both of these plans by having the students attend evening classes for a part of the course and day classes for the remainder.

Whatever the method of school organisation, the purpose of the rabfac is the same—to take men and women directly from the factories and give them a technical training. Trade unions pick these people, and in many cases support them during their school course.

The student who showed me through the Rabfac at Vladikavkaz had spent several years in the United States as a land and timber worker. Now he was studying forestry in the Vladikavkaz Rabfac.

“I did my best in the United States,” said he, “but I could never get a chance. Every time I got a little money saved up I lost my job, so nothing ever came of my plans to get an education. Besides, I was an agitator, and that made it hard. After the Russian Revolution they deported me. There was nothing for me to do but to come back here.”

“Do you still agitate here?” I asked him.

“Every summer,” said he. “I go from village to village and tell the peasants about the new life that is ahead of them if they will just take hold and create it. And here the Union backs me up. They made it possible for me to come to the Rabfac. A chap cannot do this kind of thing for himself very well. It goes much better when he is backed by an organisation.”

We went to the door of one of the class rooms. Immediately a student from the class came out and asked us what we wanted.

We told him, and then I asked: “Why did you get up and come out when we opened the door?”

“I am the chairman of the class committee,” said he. “It is our business to see that things go right in the class.”

Each class had such an organisation. It was the disciplinary and administrative unit of the student life in the Rabfac.

This Rabfac was a day school. Students came to it from the surrounding towns and from the countryside. It was located in an old newspaper office that had been partly converted for school purposes. There were 150 students, divided into four main subject groups, on the Dalton Plan. In pedagogy there were four classes, in agriculture, four classes, in technology one class and in biology, one class. Three quarters of these students were men; one

quarter, women. Those who were not sent by trade unions were sent by village Soviets or councils. All spent from three to four years in the school.

Student organisations provided living quarters. The students lived in small groups of from three to six.

School administration was carried on by an executive committee consisting of the director of the school, one representative of the students and one representative of the faculty. The larger school committee consisted of the director, six teachers, six students, and six representatives of the local trade unions and political organisations.

There were nine rabfacs in the North Caucasus. Seven were day schools and two were evening schools. In Baku there were five—a central school in the city and four in the surrounding country. The central school was particularly well housed. Four rabfacs in Tiflis were conducted in four different languages to meet the needs of the Turkish, Armenian, Georgian and Russian workers.

The rabfac which I visited in Rostov was a large day school with 680 students. There was a night rabfac in the same building with a student body of 180. A quarter of the day students and a fifth of the evening students were women. Ninety per cent of these students were supported in whole or in part by the unions that had sent them.

All work in the Rostov Rabfac was organised on the laboratory plan. I saw some excellent class work and some fine teaching in this school.

The school was controlled by an executive committee of five: the director, two teachers and two students.

Student organisation was thorough. The students were organised in their respective unions: metal, farm and timber, building, wood, railroad, mines, education. The Young Communists had an organisation. There was also a general school organisation of all students with an executive committee of nine, selected for a year, and sub-committees on: academic work, co-operation, health, sanatorium care, food, domicile.

Educationally each rabfac represents the organised effort of a picked group of young workers to get a technical education. Economically it is a self-governing, co-operative group of workers who believe in the workability of Communism, and who try to practise some of its simpler precepts.

SCOTT NEARING

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**“THE PLEBS” DEPENDS ON ITS FRIENDS.  
WHICH MEANS WE LOOK TO YOU TO DO YOUR BIT.**

# THE "DEMOCRATISATION" OF CAPITAL

SINCE its former Chairman, the one-time millionaire Mr. J. C. Gould, has fallen like the proverbial rocket-stick into the Bankruptcy Court, the Central Council of Economic Study Leagues cannot very well advance the superior brains and directive ability of the employer as a defence of capital. Such recent cases as that of the blind and insane Massachusetts woman, whose fortune of \$365,000 has grown to \$2,000,000 during her fifty-six years of life as an inmate of an asylum, are also disturbing to that argument. Therefore its constituent bodies have followed the lead of Walter Runciman and now endeavour to prove that capital is owned by a great number of poor people. Books have been written in the United States to prove this "rapid diffusion of ownership," which in 1924, according to Prof. T. N. Carver, made the workers largely the owners of \$34,666,629,573 in savings deposits, insurance premiums and loan associations. The *Financial Times* (19-12-25) prepared an imposing and representative list of companies to show the smallness of the average holding of each shareholder. Some while ago in the *Fortnightly Review* J. A. R. Marriott "proved" that the British workers owned at least £800,000,000 of property in cottages, co-ops., saving banks, trade unions, etc. This line of argument is used to show that instead of removing the capitalist *every worker can himself become one.*

While the defenders of capital are trying to prove that workers are already the holders of capital, many companies are deliberately pursuing a policy which will give some semblance of truth to the assertion. The Southern Railway may be slow in some things, but we notice that a recent issue of £3,000,000 bonds was offered to its shareholders *and employes.* In the United States deliberate campaigns have been carried through by go-ahead companies, and systematic deduction from wages made for the purchase of shares. In the *National City Bank* (N. York) *Letter* (April 24th) it is stated that a large percentage of the shareholders in the four great Meat Trusts (Armour, Swift, Wilson and Cudahy) are employes. It is true that ownership of the Ford Motor Company is almost entirely owned by one family, but the great U.S. Steel Corporation boasts 150,000 stockholders; the American Telephone and Telegraph has 348,000; and the Pennsylvania Railroad Co. 145,000. How quickly the movement has grown is shown by the fact that the

American T. & T. had only 65,000 stockholders in 1915, which it has increased more than five times by appealing directly to its customers and employes, using the latter as stock salesmen. The Bell Telephone Co. declares with pride that in June, '25, 630,000 persons held its securities, 62,500 of these were employes and more than 165,000 were acquiring stock by payroll deductions. Mr. R. S. Binkerd made an inquiry covering railroad, public utility, oil, iron manufacturing and distributive companies. He found (*N.Y. City Bank Letter*, July, '25) that their stockholders had increased between 1918 to 1925 from 2,537,105 to 5,051,499 and in this practical doubling 338,700 employes and 864,754 regular customers of the industries had purchased stock. The employe figure, he thinks, is underestimated because only at the completion of the instalment payments, stretching from twenty-one months to five years, is the employe listed as a shareholder. In the spring of last year the employes of the N.Y., New Haven and Hartford Rly. were persuaded to subscribe \$600,000 for debenture bonds to help "their" company out of a tight place. About a year ago the N.Y. City Bank itself gave every one of its 8,000 employes the right to buy its shares in instalments and by wage deductions and at favourable terms; the greater the salary the more shares allowed. Readers of the speeches of the chairmen of the Big Five Banks and of other companies in Britain will have noticed that here also the same movement can be seen.

The figures of the non-Socialist Prof. Clay provoked by Mr. Runciman (*Times*, March, '25) are worthy of repetition: 75.4 per cent of the population own 7.6 per cent of the national capital in holdings of under £100, while 0.3 per cent own 37.6 per cent in holdings of over £25,000. Emil Davies has made an effective exposure of "the rapid diffusion of ownership" in railway companies, the Prudential, and the Tilling Co. (see *Railway Review*, 24-7-25, and *D.H.*, 7-1-26). By eliminating duplicates the nominal 700,000 shareholders for circularising purposes is reduced to 252,000 which means an average holding of £4,000. But obviously to work out an average is no real information. Supposing one man has £100 and 99 have nothing. Do the latter feel they have cash because the *average* of the group members is £1. In the Tilling Co., where the average worked out at £243, one fourth of the total capital was held by eight out of the 2,500 shareholders. Then again it is possible for the "small investor" to have £200 in 1000 different concerns. Unfortunately Labour is not so impersonal as Capital, and a worker cannot, like his "director", be busy simultaneously in twenty or thirty concerns.

So the latest contradiction of capitalism is that it hopes to prove us all to be capitalists. We shall practise abstinence to get a share

in "our" firm, and fewer foremen and supervisors will be necessary to get the greater output for "our" dividends. Strikes will be anathema and Poplarism abhorred by those workers who, like the beetles in *The Insect Play*, are absorbed in "their kepital—their little all." Of course there are difficulties—the couple of millions of British unemployed will not become subscribers to new issues of stocks for employes. Even those working—having had the yearly total of wages cut down by a further £4,000,000 in 1925—will not be able to take up "the average holding of £100 to £150." In the United States Prof. Douglas, using the basic period of 1890-1899, finds that real wages in 1923 have fallen, as they buy but 95% of the necessities purchased before. Thus even the chance for the U.S. worker of stockholding grows smaller. Out of 37,000,000 income receivers in the U.S., 32,000,000 get less than \$2,000 a year, a sum which leaves little margin for savings. Altogether the Economic Leagues will have no easy task. Moreover, to the more fortunate sections of the workers, to the professionals and to the lower layers of the middle class who actually have holdings, there are considerations which should be made clear. They will never have a chance to be a Bottomley, a Bevan or a Sir William Hopwood promoting companies at fees of £5,000 to £10,000 a company. They are the little fish for the sharks. Balance sheets will be used to conceal profits from them. When companies are reorganised and "founders' shares" established at a high figure for "goodwill,"\* their's is the after anxiety if by chance they buy the stock of the inflated company. Even if they play for safety in debentures their life-savings are not always safe, as the Workman Clark Scandal (*M.G. Com.*, Sep. 13th, 1923) showed. Such small investors do not have the inside knowledge by which to anticipate such writings down of capital as occurred in Dunlop's (from £20,000,000 to £9,000,000) in Crosse and Blackwell (from £7,354,382 to £2,728,981) and recently in Vickers' (reduction to  $\frac{1}{3}$ ). They have no effective control over the mismanagement which preceded such measures, for, as the *L.R.D. Circular* (Jan. '26) pointed out, only 1,000 out of the 68,000 odd shareholders turned up at the Special Vickers meeting when the above cut was made; their one amendment was withdrawn at the Chairman's request; and their advisory committee is restricted by the directors and a special committee appointed by them *in absolute secrecy*.

This leads us into the question of control because, however many consumers and employes are persuaded to become shareholders in a concern, their effective control is of little consequence. Apparently the Economics Professor at Harvard, T. N. Carver,

\* For example the proprietors of Stephens' Inks received £557,452 for goodwill compared with £217,548 for net assets.—(*D.H.*, 10-3-25).

thinks otherwise, for in a paper given to the Columbia University Academy he thus welcomed a new era :—

The joint stock corporation always was, in theory, a democratic institution. For several reasons it failed, in the past, to be democratic in practice. It is now actually becoming, in practice as well as in theory, a democratic institution.

Then he opens up a vista (such as Silas Morton in *The Inheritors* never saw) which must soothe the U.S. men of business nervous about Moscow.

It is too soon to predict all the results of this diffusion of ownership or to say how far reaching some of these results will be. It is at least reasonable to expect that, when the labouring and the capitalist class become somewhat blended, there will be less class-conscious antagonism between them, even though there remain many labourers who are not capitalists and many capitalists who are not labourers. If the great majority of the labourers are capitalists, even in a small way, and if the great majority of capitalists really have to work in order to earn a living, this blending of the two classes will eliminate the gulf that formerly separated them. . . . Wage controversies of the future in this country will probably be much less rancorous and destructive than they have been in the past, because the element of class-consciousness will be eliminated for life.

That little prophecy alone ought to guarantee Carver a life job at Harvard. Unfortunately the Labour Banks, in which the unions are "going into business"; such disputes as the one between the late Warren Stone, acting for the Locomotivemen's Bank and J. W. Lewis of the United Mine Workers, in which the former refused to observe trade union rates in the mines controlled by him; and the generally relative good position of the American worker—these lend some colour to Carver's prediction. However, we would like to hear him read the same statement say in 1945. But not content to diffuse ownership he asserts that thus the workers will get control :—

It is reasonable to suppose also that this wide diffusion of ownership, especially of the shares of large industrial corporations, would result in a real democratisation of industry. Where the workers own it, or own a considerable share in it, they automatically acquire a place on its councils. The participation of labour in management does not then have to be artificially promoted or based on any artificial ground. This will be real as distinguished from the spurious sort known as government ownership.

Upon this point apparently Carver has failed to secure the support of all his colleagues, for the conservative Prof. W. Z. Ripley, also of Harvard, in a paper, which was not quoted by the bankers' letters, but by the Labour papers, tore both the Carver pretensions to shreds. This is his view of present developments :—

As for the wide distribution of stock to employes and consumers of the corporations product, the effect is bound to be cumulative with that of insinuation of banking power between ownership and operation. Corporations have always been susceptible to control by concentration of voting power. Far less than half of the capital stock may be as effective for such control as possession of an actual majority. But it is elemental, requiring no proof, that the larger the number of shareholders the more easily may a small concentrated block of minority holders exercise sway over all the rest. With a dozen

owners, probably 51 per cent will be necessary for dominance. With 300,000 scattered holdings, a possible 15 or 20 per cent of the votes can never be overmatched at an election. The important point to note is that the wider the diffusion of ownership the more readily does effective control run to the intermediaries, in this case promoters, bankers or management companies. Until corrected by appropriate revision of our corporation laws or practice, this apparently healthful manifestation may contain the seeds of grave abuse.

Ripley himself only proposes to meet this by publicity and standardisation of accounts, which does not sound like an effective check. Nevertheless his description needs no comment to show how spurious is the loudly trumpeted democratisation of industry.

MARK STARR.

## ARE WE TOO ACADEMIC ?

*In the following article Comrade Williams hits out at several cherished convictions, and makes an interesting practical suggestion. The Labour College movement has never funkcd criticism, and we think I.W.C.E.ers will agree that the ideas here ventilated are worth discussing.*

“**T**HERE is nothing constant but change.” This is one of the most oft-repeated phrases in Marxian vocabulary, and nowhere must its truth be applied more rigidly than among Marxians themselves. The constant flow of social evolution, as expressed in modern industrial problems, necessitates a candid and critical survey of the part played by our educational movement in the class struggle of to-day.

The Labour College movement in Britain came into being as a direct expression of the need of the working class for its own intellectual weapons in the industrial conflicts of the years preceding the Great War. Its early growth coincided with bitter economic struggles, and the College supporters took an active part in those struggles. The history of the Labour College—which might well be written for the edification of our younger comrades—will remain inseparably associated with the Cambrian strike of 1911, the Minimum Wage struggle of 1912, the South Wales seven days’ strike of 1915, the wage-battles of the Clyde during the war period, and many other battlestorms. The workers in those struggles received to an appreciable degree their much-needed intellectual stimulus from the newly formed educational movement. The active spirits in both movements co-operated in a manner that showed us Marxism in its working clothes.

After the war new chapters were added to the history of our movement. One was the re-opening of the London Labour College under its new control, and another was the formation of the National Council



of Labour Colleges. We are chiefly concerned here with the latter. During its short career the N.C.L.C. has been able to register a vast development of Trade Union support—financially at least—and the organisation has grown enormously. The W.E.A. has been ousted from many of its strongholds; and a network of classes—attended by the largest body of non-vocational students in the country—cover practically the whole of Britain.

So far so good. But does the utility of the N.C.L.C. movement to Trade Unionism develop in proportion to the support received? Is skilful organisation accompanied by a more vigorous participation in the class struggle? Are the methods of the W.E.A. rejected as readily in practice as in theory? Does the larger students' roll produce a larger number of rebels against the existing order of society? Or are our classes becoming too academic—and our education too "educational"?

One of the distinctive features of the educational movement originally was its clear emphasis upon the teaching of social science, to the exclusion of other forms of knowledge. The workers' need demanded the mastery, not of the forces of nature, but of the forces of society. Consequently, social science—history and economics—came before natural science. On the other hand, it rejected the culture cry of Ruskin College and kindred bodies. First things had to come first.

Now, a glance at the N.C.L.C. curriculum and class syllabuses to-day will reveal a number of subjects of the cultural and technical types. The workers are invited to attend classes in Biologic Evolution, English, Mathematics, and English Literature—all desirable subjects we agree, but subjects which could be taught in State schools. English, it may be said, becomes highly useful to the workers to express—and conceal—their thoughts. But our chief trouble lies in trying to get the masses to express, to one-half the capacity of the English they already possess, their dissatisfaction with wage slavery. If we only had a decent number of workers ready to salute their masters with three short words like "Go to hell," and with a genuine determination to despatch them to that destination, it would be of infinitely more value to us than to have an army of grammarians splitting hairs over split infinitives! Why should English become a burden on N.C.L.C. funds?

But a much greater anomaly is to be found in the treatment of the social sciences. We believe that the study of certain phases of economic theory is, from the workers' standpoint, as superfluous as it is unfruitful—from the important point of view of developing class-consciousness; and that some of the attention given to history is a sheer waste of time and energy. Especially is this so at a time when the workers are engaged in a life and death struggle—

when every force and factor available should be utilised towards the solution of the problems of the hour.

What we have to ask ourselves is : Does our education matter in the industrial struggles of 1926, and the years to follow? Is a scientific conception of man's emergence from the animal world vitally necessary for his emergence from wage-slavery? Is it necessary to dwell upon the various features of Patriarchy and Matriarchy in order to get working men and women to stand side by side as useful members of the workers' movement? Is it essential that we should familiarise ourselves with all the arguments for and against the theory that the English Manor developed from the Mark in order to demand and secure the socialisation of British soil? To my mind most of this historic and prehistoric pedantry throws no more light on current industrial problems than did the discovery of Tut-ankh-Amen's tomb on the Irish boundary question.

Much of this academic tendency is due to the wide separation made between the class lecturer and the propagandist. We all recognise that both fill important rôles which should be clearly distinguished. But the error is made of assuming that the tutor can afford to deal with a wide range of subjects much more removed from everyday life than those handled by the agitator, who confines himself to current topics. The agitator must start from the banks of the Thames, but the tutor may start from the banks of the Tigris. Indeed, as if to register a respectable distance from the soapbox the tutor delves into the realm of soapless savagery!

This is a false distinction. The problems for both are the same. The difference should be in the methods adopted. The duty of the agitator is to stimulate the workers to take action, but the tutor's part lies in giving the problem—the same problem as that dealt with by the agitator—a more comprehensive treatment. For example, in an industrial crisis, the work of the agitator is to rouse the people to stand solid, while the tutor should be explaining the various phases of the issue at stake, as well as its relations to other problems at home and abroad, with a careful survey of its implications.

Subjects like the Dawes plan, the Chinese rebellion, and the Australian Labour Governments, should form subject matter for careful treatment, and warrant a declaration of our viewpoint. Our class work could be supplemented by the issuing of literature—say in pamphlet form—dealing with such political problems upon which the workers have a right to demand our considered judgment. Let the doubtful be assured that all this is quite in keeping with the best traditions of our movement. For our best members have been our best fighters. Once upon a time there was a brilliant scholar, who was also a fervid prophet. Indeed, he was a passionate political agitator, who even devoted a part of his valuable time to the writing

of pamphlets dealing with the problems of his day. His name was Karl Marx.

And the industrial struggle of to-day. During this coal crisis we know that the enemy will pursue its propaganda of word and deed on an unprecedented scale. What is the N.C.L.C. going to do in the fight? Will it focus the attention of the masses on the conditions of the silver miners of Ancient Greece, or on those of the coal miners of Modern Britain? Will it abandon its study of the cragbarons of 1066 in order to fight more effectively the bagbarons of 1926? Will it supply the industrial movement with the vitality it so sadly needs? This crisis presents a vista of problems such as Reparations, Russia, the industrialisation of backward countries, over-capitalisation of industry, the relation of wages and profits to-day, besides the various remedies advocated for the coal industry. Here is work for the N.C.L.C. To neglect it will be fatal.

Of course, we know that many lecturers and organisers already strive hard in the direction we advocate. They gradually substitute the problems of the hour for the more academic studies. But this is not enough. We need the national body to move forward with a more up-to-date policy. We need a general move—and a more rapid move. To give a concrete example of what we seek, we believe the N.C.L.C., with a bold lead from the Executive, should abandon at least 80 per cent of its ordinary activities within the next three months in order to prosecute a vigorous campaign centring upon the coal crisis. Class lectures as well as ordinary propaganda could be provided; emergency plans could be discussed and formulated. The maximum number of Trade Unionists would have the salient facts of the situation on their finger tips. The N.C.L.C. Executive would constantly strive at every stage to ascertain the precise needs of the trade unions and act accordingly. Such a step would establish a real understanding between the educational and the industrial movements. It would enable the N.C.L.C., in a manner hitherto unknown to it, to do good—and make good.

Let our educational movement be more concerned about *making* than *studying* history. Let its economics make more for the *elimination* than the *explanation* of capitalist robbery. Let it deposit its "ologies" into cold storage. Let its philosophy be a philosophy of action. Then its education will be a living reality in the workers' struggle.

J. M. WILLIAMS.

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*Breathes there a Pleb with soul so dead  
Who never to himself hath said—  
"This is my own, my movement's, Mag.,  
I swear my efforts shall not flag—*

*until I've put a dozen or two on the circulation."*

## Geographical Footnotes to Current History :

### CHINA

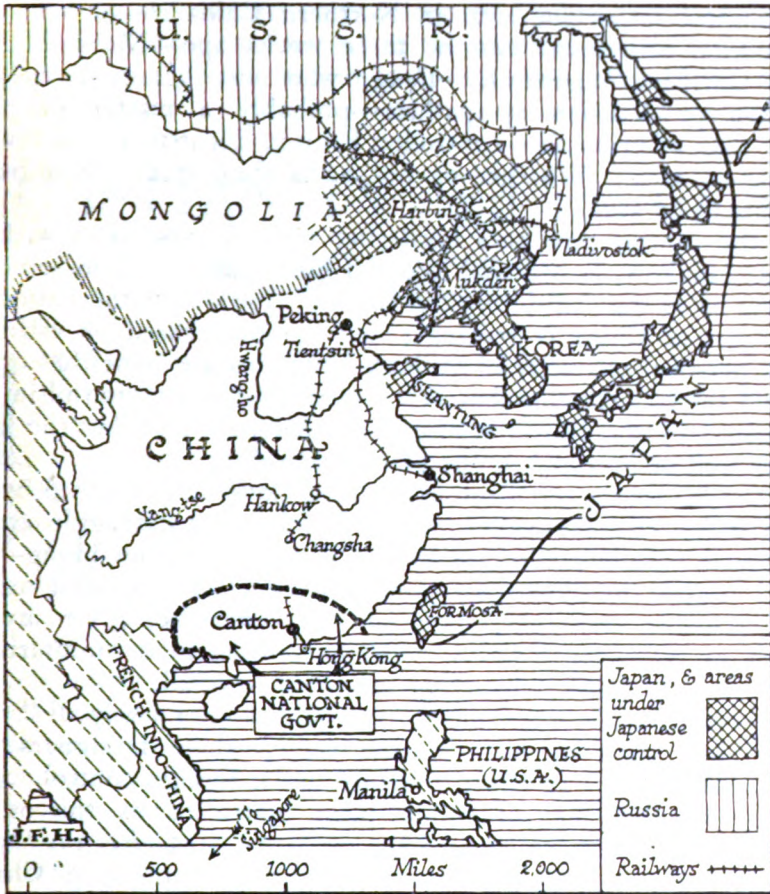
**A** SPEAKER at a Labour meeting was reported in the *Daily Herald* recently to have declared that there were farm-labourers in this country working 65 and 70 hours for a living-in wage of 15s., and to have appealed to his audience "not to bother about China and Japan while such sores were eating into the body of Labour in England."

But while it may once have been true that it was the eyes of the fool which were on the ends of the earth, it is certainly true to-day that only a fool will fix his eyes on his own country and shut them to what is happening in other parts of the world. For what happens to-day in China or Peru may to-morrow have very definite reactions in Britain. We have learned—or ought to have learned—during the past few years that there is a very close and direct connection between the number of unemployed British workers and the operations of British capital and British diplomacy in overseas markets, raw material areas, and spheres of investment.

China, the home of a quarter of the world's population, and possessing enormous natural resources, as yet almost unexploited, is one of the great prizes for which the governing groups of the richest Powers are contending to-day. And on the fate of China depends, in large measure, the standards of living of the wage-slaves of Europe. For, brought entirely under the control of British, American or Japanese capitalists, and with even a part of that vast population changed from peasants into proletarians, China will quickly become a formidable rival to industrial Europe. Some knowledge of how history is being made there to-day is therefore important to every worker desirous of understanding the forces which are moulding the destinies of his class.

Since the political revolution of 1911, and the gradual decline in the power and prestige of the central government at Peking, China (cf. the capitalist press) has been in a state of "anarchy"; a condition of affairs which has certainly been encouraged, if not actually fomented, by the agents of the Imperialist Powers. The military governors of various provinces—called Tu-chuns—have revolted against the Peking government, and maintained themselves and their armies by annexing taxes and other forms of tribute from

whatever areas they could bring under their control. These gentlemen—half bandits, half political adventurers—are in fact, as the Chinese workers' press invariably calls them, the "hunting dogs of the foreign Imperialists"; pawns, that is, in the hands of the Powers on whom they are dependent for munitions and loans.



Since we usually look at very small-scale maps of the Far East many of us are apt to over-emphasise the importance of Russia's proximity to China. Students should note (i) the scale of miles in the above map; (ii) the fact that the only railway connection between the two countries runs through the area under Japanese control; (iii) that Mongolia is largely desert; (iv) that the nearest thing to a Socialist Government in China is at Canton, in the extreme south. Note also the ring of enemies around Canton—the British at Hong-Kong, the Americans at Manila, the French in Indo-China, and the Japanese at Formosa.

One of them, Chang-Tso-Lin, operating in the north, is the tool of Japan, which undoubtedly aims at setting up Chang, or some other figure-head, as a puppet Emperor whose tenure of power

would rest on Japanese support. According to recent messages, Chang has now proclaimed the independence of Manchuria ; which area Japan, from her base in Korea, can effectively control. There is no doubt that during the recent fighting Japanese aeroplanes, munitions and men (in Chinese uniforms) intervened to save Chang from defeat.

His most important rival in Northern China is—or was until his sudden retirement two or three weeks ago—Marshal Feng, the “Christian” general. Feng, who was generally believed to have pro-Russian sympathies—probably a matter of policy rather than of principle—controlled Peking, Tientsin and the whole Hwang-ho area. Whether or not he is staging a “come back” remains to be seen.

In the central provinces bordering the Yang-tse, and with his base at Hankow, is Marshal Wu Pei Fu. According to some observers, he is the “disinterested patriot” for whom the nationalist movement of China is waiting ; but opinions based on estimates of the personal character of military chieftains are somewhat doubtful, and the fact remains that Wu is operating in a region ultimately dominated by the British at Shanghai. Also, the fact that the *Times* speaks well of him makes one pause and reflect.

In the far south, the Canton National Government set up by Dr. Sun-Yat-Sen still maintains itself. But it has to struggle against a virtual blockade carried on by the British, based on Hong-Kong—and backed by American gunboats from Manila—and against every possible assistance, financial and otherwise, given by the British to whatever “white” elements—traders or militarists—can be used to assist in bringing about its downfall.

The coast towns—the “gates” into China—are nearly all “treaty ports,” i.e., ports open to foreign trade, where foreigners have special privileges. In effect, they are under foreign control. (The Chinese Customs has of course been controlled by the outside Powers since first Britain forced the gates of China, after the Opium War, in 1842. The primary demand of the growing Chinese nationalist movement—of every section of the population, that is, apart from the Tu-chuns and their followers—is for fiscal autonomy.) The way in which the Powers are prepared to keep control of the Ports was shewn clearly enough by the Shanghai and Canton shootings last year.

British Labour—in addition to tackling the sores which are eating into its own body (nay, as a part of that very job)—has certain obvious responsibilities in regard to China. It has to demand the cessation of British loans to assist anti-nationalist (and anti-working-class) efforts to overthrow the Canton Government. It has to insist that British troops shall not be used to shoot down

strikers or peaceful demonstrators, and that British residents shall not be permitted to form Fascist organisations to "undertake the policy of the strong hand in China." And it ought, in its own interests as well as because it is part of a world international movement, to assist in the development of a Trade Union movement in China by sending to China organisers and, if necessary, money. Neither a Socialist Britain nor a Workers' United States of Europe can be built if we shut our eyes to the needs of our fellow-workers—exploited by the same money-lords—in other parts of the world.

J. F. HORRABIN.

## CHRISTIANITY and the CLASS STRUGGLE

**T**HE educational and propaganda work of Socialism is from time to time and in all lands to a greater or less extent confronted by the powerful factor of the Church. This organisation of the Christian religion has nearly two thousand years of historical tradition behind it, and inspires the instinctive reverence and devotion of millions of human beings. It is one of the most colossal phenomena in history and for this reason alone must be recognised by Marxians, its origins probed and its existence accounted for.

In most countries the leaders of the Church are hostile to such a relatively young movement as Socialism and often set their propaganda apparatus against the working classes and in defence of the established order of society. In some countries indeed the alliance between the Church and the bourgeois or semi-feudal state is very close. In Tsarist Russia since the time of Peter the Great, and in Prussia since the time of Frederick William I, the Church has been simply an organ of government. This largely accounts for the fact that the Socialist movement in these countries has been anti-Church, indeed anti-Christian. In other countries on the other hand, like England, the Church has been less openly associated with the governmental machine. The British mercantile and banking aristocracy established its power over the state and ousted the feudal lords and the absolute monarchy much earlier and more completely than in other lands and did so with the aid of the Church. The Puritan movement during the Civil War indicates that the middle class revolution in this country bore a strong religious aspect. In other words the middle class in this country did not have to fight against the Church as such in its attempt to set up its authority in

the State, as was the case in many continental countries, where the Church was the handmaid of feudalism. For in England the Church became divided and the various heresies at the time of the Reformation and of the Commonwealth were in reality the successful handmaids of the new bourgeois society of England. All this gives the Anglican Church a certain prestige as the spiritual support of middle class democracy which neither the Catholic nor the Lutheran Churches on the continent possess. Hence there is no organised anti-clerical movement in this country, but on the contrary the traditions of the Protestant Reformation have even penetrated into the Labour movement, as one sees by the fact that local Labour Parties sometimes celebrate May Day by going to church, and Anglican clergymen on Labour platforms are much more common phenomena than Catholic or Lutheran pastors on continental Socialist platforms. Moreover the Anglican Church now is much divided, just as the Catholic Church in England was before the Reformation. The hierarchy is mainly reactionary. The lower orders of the clergy have much sympathy with the proletarian movement.

All this shows that it is essential for Socialists to take the Church seriously, to find out what there is of value in the Christian teaching and what is merely the superstition of past ages handed down to the present. But to do this a thorough investigation of the history of the Christian religion is necessary. No one has done more in this direction than Karl Kautsky, whose monumental piece of historical research, *The Foundations of Christianity*, has just been published in an English translation by Allen and Unwin, Ltd. One can indeed congratulate the publishers in having taken the initiative in bringing to English readers this great work, which has been known to the continental Socialist movement now for several years.

In his introduction Kautsky points out how essential it is to get the Marxian mind in investigating an historical phenomenon.

The traditional conception of history views political movements only as a struggle to bring about certain specific political institutions—Monarchy, Aristocracy, Democracy, etc.—which in turn are represented as the result of specific ethical concepts and aspirations. . . . Opposed to this view of history is another, which does not content itself with a consideration of historical ideas, but seeks to run down their causes lying at the basis of society. . . . Once we have investigated the economic conditions of human beings in the various historical periods, we are freed at once from the illusion of an eternal recurrence of the same ideas, aspirations and political institutions.

Applying these general rules of historical research to the special problem of Christianity, Kautsky continues :—

Our proletarian point of view will permit us to grasp more easily than bourgeois investigators those phases of primitive Christianity which it has in common with the modern proletarian movement. But the emphasis placed upon economic conditions, which is a necessary corollary of the materialist conception of history, preserves us from the danger of forgetting the peculiar character



of the ancient proletariat merely because we grasp the common element in both epochs.

Christianity was undoubtedly in its origins a movement of an impoverished class in the Eastern colonial parts of the Roman Empire. But we have no reliable evidence as to the personality of Jesus and only indirect evidence as to the type of people whom he led. Kautsky rightly dismisses the testimony of the Jewish historian Josephus about the existence of Jesus, as an interpolation of some pious Christian copyist, decades later. The Gospels themselves were written from 50 to 150 years after Jesus' supposed death and were therefore exposed to doctoring by zealous copyists and Christian propagandists, whose only object was to get their ideas accepted at the expense of historical accuracy. The most accurate of the Gospels probably is that of St. Mark, because it was written about fifty years after the founder's death; next comes St. Luke, next St. Matthew, and finally St. John, whose embellishments on original documents rival that of a Russian counter-revolutionary or a *Times* correspondent in Riga. The only reliable non-Christian evidence of the existence of Jesus is that of Tacitus who, however, merely says that there was a prophet at this time of this name in Palestine, who was executed. For the rest we have only the Gospels to rely upon, and any unprejudiced person reading them must see such a mass of contradictory material as to convince him that a whole number of people have been doctoring original reports for propaganda purposes and with different objects in view. It is these different objects of the Christian propagandists that give us the clue to the composition of the Christian congregations both in their early and in their later stages. There can be no doubt that the four Gospels reflect a class struggle going on within the Christian congregations during the first five centuries of this era.

There is St. Luke with his report of the Sermon on the Mount containing "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled . . . but woe unto ye that are rich, for ye have received your consolation; woe unto ye that are full, for ye shall hunger." This suggests that whoever wrote this Gospel was recording the sayings and doings of a rebel against established society of the day and a leader of a heterogeneous crowd of poor handicraftsmen and slaves, the flotsam and jetsam of a decaying civilisation based on slavery. These are the types that are seen speaking through the mouth of Jesus in St. Mark's Sermon on the Mount.

But then there is St. Matthew's Gospel written much later, when the need was felt to attract the wealthy members of Roman society to Christianity. This sort of language would terrify them and so St. Matthew in the best phrases of Bernstein Revisionism or Fabianism discovers that what Jesus really said was: "Blessed are the poor

*in spirit*, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven . . . Blessed are they who are hungry and thirsty *for justice*, for they shall have their fill" (my italics). The poor are no longer an object of interest, but only the poor in spirit and they shall get pie, not here, but in the sky, when they die.

St. Luke's Gospel abounds with passages which fume against the rich. Typical is the passage about Dives and Lazarus and the tirade against the rich man who cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. St. Mark's is written in a similar tone. On the other hand St. Matthew and St. John betray an intriguing anxiety to allay the fears of the rich, and show the wavering that Christianity is after all quite a respectable religion. Commenting on this conflict of evidence in the Gospels, Kautsky remarks: "The struggle between socially opposed forces within the framework of the Christian Church became ostensibly a mere struggle concerning the interpretation of the words of Jesus, and superficial historians are simple-minded enough to believe that all the great and often bloody conflicts within Christendom, which were fought under religious flags, were nothing more than struggles for mere words." But these struggles were very real and concerned the contest between the revolutionary element of Christianity, the slaves and broken-down outcasts of society, trying to retain the original character of the religion on the one hand, and the wealthy aristocratic elements, who were disillusioned with the gods of the decaying Roman civilisation and were seeking something new but not too dangerous for them, on the other. They wanted a new label and they were only concerned that its colour should be pale pink and not "deepest red."

Kautsky then analyses in a masterly manner the society of the Roman Empire at the time of the appearance of Christianity. The cities of the Empire were full of a ragged proletariat, living partly on charity, partly by stealing, partly by odd jobs, while at the other end of the scale was a class which did not know what to do with the material wealth in the form of food and precious metals which poured into it from its slave-worked estates. For capitalism in its modern sense did not exist then. Technical science had not reached the stage which enabled surplus values to be invested in developing virgin areas of the earth. Surplus values had to be eaten, worn, drunk, converted into palaces and temples. They thus became a nausea even to their possessors and disillusionment was rife in the upper layers of society at this time. Roman society was seeking for a Saviour, a *Deus ex machina*, a Messiah, a Son of God to come down and show Mankind a way out of the awful impasse into which a social order, based on slavery, had fallen.

M. PHILIPS PRICE.

(To be concluded)

# WORKERS' EDUCATION in IRELAND

WHEN, in 1924, I visited Ireland on behalf of the N.C.L.C. Executive to survey the ground in connection with N.C.L.C. Union Educational Schemes, there was practically no working-class educational work being done in Ireland. In Dublin, some time previously, there had existed for a short time the Connolly Labour College, which had to close down as a result of the troubled times that preceded the Irish "Settlement," as it is called. In Belfast there was a W.E.A., which was thoroughly W.E.A.ish, and the educational policy of which was University to the backbone. The only other working-class educational work of any importance at all was that done by the Belfast I.L.P., which, later, merged its educational activities in the Belfast Labour College.

One result of this visit was that the Executive felt justified in appointing a full-time man, G. Ellis, and stationing him in the meantime in the Belfast area. The results have come up to expectations, and the prospects are excellent. Not merely is a substantial amount of educational work being done in Belfast, but classes are being opened at Newry and Londonderry, while the local Labour Movement is giving every support.

In Dublin in 1924 the meetings with representative officials of the Irish Trade Union Movement indicated that quite a number were keenly interested in workers' education and thoroughly understood the value of independence in that education. At the time, an interview took place with the Executive of the Irish Labour Party and Trades Union Congress.

The next step occurred during the summer, when the Irish Congress and Irish Transport Workers' Union sent a delegation of students—rank and files and officials—to the N.C.L.C.'s Rothesay Summer School. The result of the School was that T. Irwin, the

Congress representative, drew up a very favourable report for his Executive, and a further result was that the Irish Transport Workers' Union put down a resolution for the forthcoming Irish Congress. In addition, it should be mentioned that other Irish students were present including some members of the Irish Women Workers' Union (among whom was Miss Chevenix), who were much interested in the Summer School. The Transport Workers' resolution read as follows:—

"That Congress recognises the urgent necessity for the movement in Ireland to provide Adult Working-Class Education, based upon Trade Union support and control, in the social sciences as distinct from the ordinary cultural education imparted by non-working-class institutions; welcomes the efforts to provide this in Belfast; congratulates the affiliated organisations which have given practical support to the Working-Class Educational Movement; and in order that these efforts may be co-ordinated and made more effective, renews the instruction adopted by the 1919 Congress to the incoming National Executive to promote or co-operate with recognised Trade Unions in promoting such a scheme of Adult Working-Class Education, under the control and direction of the National Executive or of Trade Unions."

The resolution was moved in a very able speech by Cathal O'Shannon, who had been one of the lecturers at the Rothesay School. The distinctly working-class interpretation he put on phrases like the ambiguous phrase "community," which was included in the Congress Education Committee's report, was exceedingly neat. The resolution was opposed by a number of delegates, who, one gathers, did not fully appreciate the importance of Independent Working-Class Education, as it was understood by Connolly and by the movement in Britain. The

opposition, however, was ably dealt with by T. Irwin, who stressed the importance of a "distinctively working-class education." The amendment to the resolution was lost by 72 votes against 54, the resolution itself being carried.

Following upon that, a Workers' Educational Institute has been set up in Dublin under the auspices of the Irish Congress, and already classes are being started. Amongst those who are lecturing are J. O'Kelly, and Cathal O'Shannon, both of whom were at the Rotherham School. T. Irwin is the chairman, and on the Executive are quite a number, such as A. Heron, who fully appreciate the importance of the right kind of education. Other lecturers are D. O'Leary, A. E. Malone, and R. J. P. Mortished.

A leading article on the situation in a recent number of the *Voice of Labour* says:—

"We must make of this Institute a source of correct knowledge which will give the Irish working class a clear perception of the struggle in which they are engaged and of the forces operating against them—unless

this Institute keeps steadily in view its function in the Trade Union movement, as a training ground and a base for future fighters in the cause of Labour, it is doomed to swift extinction and failure. However, we have no fears that the Workers' Educational Institute will fail in its purpose or falter in its mission of spreading truth and realism amongst an ever-widening circle of workers. We are confident that it marks but the beginning of a new stage in our struggle for liberty and social justice, and that its usefulness and service will quickly gain for it recognition and honour throughout the Irish working-class movement—it will supplement and give increased power and strength to every blow we shall strike in both the industrial and political fields, and it may serve as a medium of bringing all together from various unions into intimate and close fusion and unity in the common battleground of Labour *versus* Capitalism."

That is the point of view that makes workers' education a real thing and not a sham. J. P. M. MILLAR.

## LETTERS

### CLASS-CONSCIOUS OXFORD

DEAR COMRADE,—As I happen to be writing at the moment a critical essay on Oxford life, I was more than usually interested in the article on class-conscious Oxford published in your last issue. I agree with Comrade Hutchison that Oxford is class-conscious—an aggressive Toryism coupled with a large amount of insincere religiosity is regrettably noticeable among the Dons and among certain sections of the undergraduates, but he is terribly unfair to the academic side of Oxford. The personnel may be class-conscious, the curriculum is not.

I shall answer Comrade Hutchison especially in the matter of the Greats School, which occupied two and a half fairly busy years of my long stay at Oxford. Comrade Hutchison surely cannot be a prey to that vicious tendency, which assumes that any book hailing from the haunts of the bourgeoisie, must be antagonistic to

proletarian interests! For Greats I read very largely the works of Bentham, Mill, Kant and Hegel. As a result I am a Socialist. Bentham and Mill, if I remember rightly, were upholders of a very extreme form of democracy, on the grounds that governing classes govern only for themselves and never for communities. That looks to me rather Marxian than anything else. Kant insisted, almost to the point of boredom, on the equality of all men before the law. I believe many socialists of to-day are anxious for "Jix" to learn that lesson. Hegel certainly extolled the nation as something very blessed, but it was a nation uncontaminated by Capitalism, which he regarded as the destroyer of things beautiful and good, and surely Comrade Hutchison has read Marx's introduction to *Capital*, and remembers how Marx admitted himself the debt he owed to Hegel. Also Rousseau, one of the greatest of revolutionaries, is a firmly

established textbook for Greats. I agree with Hutchison that Plato and Aristotle are over-emphasised as compulsory books, but they were chosen because they were the best that a great, if distant, age could offer, and, even if Aristotle was a snob, Plato was a Communist!

In Modern Greats Ricardo—the one English economist whom Marx genuinely admired—and the great founder of revolutionary socialism himself is universally insisted upon.

I admit that the Dons of Oxford are mostly Conservatives, and in commenting upon our textbooks and our own essays, are apt to give expression to their own bourgeois views. But they do not even indulge in this habit much; they prefer to expose any contradictions present in the works we read or the theses we write.

Oxford is certainly class-conscious, but in its people, not the academic programme. I am quite sure that Comrade Hutchison will find better things to do in life than to spend five years at Oxford, like myself, and study all these philosophical treatises fairly intensely. But—I hope he will forgive my saying so—he should keep to what he knows!

Believe me,

Yours fraternally,

TERENCE GREENIDGE (B.A. Oxon.).

P.S.—I apologise for putting letters after my name, but I thought that perhaps I ought to give my credentials.

“EUROPE'S NEW MAP”

DEAR EDITOR,—As a rule my reaction to criticism is statistical. When I receive a book review I usually merely count the lines or measure the inches. But when a review so completely traverses my main effort as does your notice of *Europe's New Map* in the January PLEBS, even I feel stimulated to protest. You accuse me of writing “as though a historian of the sixteenth century had chosen to ignore the discovery of the ocean routes.” I, on the other hand, in my Preface take as my guiding principle J. R. Seeley's maxim:

History without Politics has no fruit,  
Politics without History has no root.  
If therefore you are right in your criticism I have failed indeed.

You base your charge on the section



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dealing with Alsace Lorraine. Now that section is only a side line. My main concern is with the Zone of Change which stretches from the Arctic coast of Finland to the Mediterranean coast of Greece, but in the Alsace Lorraine section you find no reference to the Lorraine iron fields. Nor is there, because it figures in the chapter on Frontiers. Or, rather, I ought to say, it should figure; because by a most regrettable lapse there is—as you say—no reference to it in the whole book. But I enclose the slide of my lecture summarising what I say about frontiers; and you will observe that the last words on it are:

NATURAL AREA UNITS

RIVER BASINS { Ruhr coal  
COMPLEMENTARY PRODUCTS { Lorraine iron

I shall of course rectify my omission in the next edition, but I shall add a paragraph to the chapter on Frontiers, not to the section on Alsace Lorraine; because France would have fought to get those provinces back even if they had held no grain of iron, just as

Bismarck took them mainly for strategic reasons in 1870.

I find that most of the people who have looked at my book read my Appendix on Illustrative Travel and leave the rest. You are the only one I have met so far who seems to have contracted the opposite complaint. Surely my "Twenty-five years of Topical Travel" as set out in the Appendix are evidence of my desire for actuality and a first-hand knowledge of current happenings. I will indeed call as evidence the last paragraph of my Appendix to refute the charge of cultured and cloistral aloofness which you base on an accidental omission in a subsidiary section of my book.

I remain,

Yours more in sorrow than in anger,  
F. J. ADKINS.

J. F. H. writes:—I did not accuse Mr. Adkins of "cultured and cloistral aloofness." I said that he was primarily interested in Racial and National problems, and very largely ignored the workings of Economic Imperialism. I quoted his treatment of Alsace Lorraine as an illustration of this; but almost any other section of his book would have served as well—e.g., that dealing with Turkey and the Balkans. I repeat, his is a stimulating and very readable little book, which every student of historical geography should get hold of: but the student of current affairs will need to supplement it by books in which economic facts and factors are given a larger place.

GIBBON

SIR,—With reference to your comment on my letter *re* Gibbon, I would submit that "an eighteenth century bourgeois rationalist," or any other kind of a rationalist, is safer reading for working men than a twentieth century bourgeois dope-monger, apart altogether from their respective merits, about which, in the cases of Gibbon and Wells, I cannot conceive the existence of two opinions among those who have read both. Of course, Wells has the advantage of knowing much (as annals) that has occurred since Gibbon's death, an advantage which makes his readers who know Gibbon

deplore his absence even in spir from Wells' pages.

I would further remark that your adjective "bourgeois" is an anachronism applied to Gibbon, as, there being no working class in Gibbon's day, there could be no bourgeoisie. The population of Britain consisted in aristocracy; traders and master-artificers in the towns, representing the ancient subfeudatories; yeomanry in the country, formed out of ancient socmen and occasional villeins regardant and copyholders; and, Rabble!!! This was the accepted name of those who became the working class—not malicious, but quite formal, and used even by the gentle Goldsmith. Gibbon came of the yeoman class.

Faithfully yours,

AUSTIN RUSSELL.

[We think our correspondent is a little at sea as regards social development and social classes in Gibbon's day. So we take this opportunity of urging him—again—to read the new PLEBS textbook on European History.—ED.]

DEAR COMRADE,—Your editorial defence of our "awful trash" in the November PLEBS admirably touches the spot, but we would like to add a word or two. If Austin Russell will read the opening paragraph of our article with care (and with "brains" as well as with "heart"!), he will see that we do NOT attack Gibbon. We merely quote Gibbon's definition of history, in order to contrast that definition with the one given in *The Communist Manifesto*.

As for the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, that monumental work is the best answer (though a rather long one) to Gibbon's own definition of history. It is "a splendid bridge from the old world to the new." But it is not "history" in the Marxist sense of the term, for Marx was not born until twenty-four years after Gibbon's death.

We stick to our guns, and reassert that "it would be a waste of time for a LABOUR COLLEGE STUDENT to read the *Decline and Fall*" (with or without the help of Mr. Silas Wegg!). As for Wells' *Outline*, if Austin Russell will look again, he will see that we did NOT recommend that book to N.C.L.C.

students. What we DID recommend was The PLEBS *Outline of European History*. We renew the recommendation.

Yours trashily,  
EDEN AND CEDAR PAUL.

MR. THOMAS—A CORRECTION

SIR,—M. H. D.—in which signature I would, perhaps, be justified in reading the identity of a Communist Party nucleus upon the Executive of the Plebs League—has quite erroneously conveyed the impression in his review of *Railways* that Mr. Thomas desired to stress my criticism of the nationalisation of the railways for the reason that it reflected his own views.

It does not. I am sorry to say that Mr. Thomas holds views on that subject nearly as obsolescent as yourself or your reviewer—which is saying a lot.

Yours faithfully,  
WALTON NEWBOLD.

DON'T BUY "BLACK" PAPERS

SIR,—The Trade Union Congress has accepted the affiliation of the Retail Book, Stationery and Allied Trades Employes' Association. This Union organises all retail workers in the Book and Stationery Trade, and has practically a one hundred per cent membership in Messrs. W. H. Smith & Son, the largest firm in the trade.

Black-coated workers are admittedly difficult to organise, and it is up to the already organised to help in the good work. Readers of every Labour paper should inquire whether the staff at their paper shop is a union one. *If not tell them there is a union working for them*, and ask them to write to me at 61a, The Mall, Ealing, W. 5, for particulars.

Yours fraternally,  
JOHN BECKETT, M.P.  
(Nat. Organiser).

## NOTES BY THE WAY for Students and Tutors

### *Over-capitalisation*

The Labour Research Department, in its surveys of industry, has for some time been pointing out that much of the present trade depression is due to the financial fact of over-capitalisation. During the 1919 boom, the capitals of businesses were inflated enormously (a) by issues of new bonus shares out of profits and reserves to existing shareholders, (b) by re-capitalisation—by buying up firms, and re-forming them with a higher capital. When the depression came, these businesses were trying to earn sufficient profit to pay an ordinary *rate* of dividend on a capital twice or three times as large as before; and to do this they had to keep prices that much higher, and (by the ordinary principle of supply and demand) they had to restrict output by that amount in order to get the higher prices and profits. For instance, £10 earned on a capital of £100 yields ten per cent.; but if the capital is increased to £200, double the profit, namely £20, will

have to be earned to keep the *rate* of dividend at ten per cent.

After having done all they could to throw the burden of the situation onto the workers by wage-reductions, the capitalists are now beginning to realise the extent to which their parlous condition is due to their own financial arrangements. And as a result we have had recently several cases of important businesses *writing-down* their capital—reducing it from the excessively inflated figure to one more in accordance with the true profit-making capacity of the business. Chief of these have been the British Dyestuffs Corporation and Vickers, Ltd. But the process will have to go much further before over-capitalisation is brought to an end, as recent articles in the *Manchester Guardian Commercial* show.

On October 29th, this paper published facts showing the extent of over-capitalisation in the cotton industry. On December 3rd, a further most illuminating article appeared on

the steel trade. This showed that the output of British steel in 1924 was 8.2 million tons as compared with 7.6 million in 1913. But the productive capacity of steel plant in the post-war period is thirteen million. However, "an examination of twenty-five of the largest firms as a basis shows two and a half times as much money (capital) in industry in 1923 as in 1913. The output in 1913-14 was seven and threequarter millions, and so the output on this reckoning, irrespective of money values, should be at least nineteen million tons, as against the figure of thirteen million. In a word, the industry is over-capitalised, and there has been a further increase since 1923."

Therefore, we have the following position:—

Actual output increased .. ..	8%	on pre-war.
Potential output increased .. ..	70%	" " "
Nominal capital increased .. ..	150%	" " "

In other words, to earn the same rate of profit as before, the amount of profit has to be one and a half times as great.

#### Labour Saving

Com. Horan has forwarded some very interesting details concerning the electrical bogies used at Liverpool for discharging ships. We quote some of his comparisons and regret that we cannot reproduce the photos of the tractors and cranes he sent:

*Electrical Cranes for Loading Wagons—Cocoa.* Original hand gang consisted of 13 men, the cocoa being weighed when delivered as well as when discharged from ship, but an arrangement was made with the Customs whereby they (the Customs) accepted the discharging weights and the gangs were reduced to 4 men, viz., 1 crane driver, 1 marker, 2 hookers-on. *A saving of 9 men.*

*Palm Kernels.* Original gang of 8 men now reduced to 1 crane driver and 2 hookers-on. *A saving of 5 men.*

*Electrical Bogies—Palm Oil.* 1 charge-hand, 1 clerk, 1 weigher, 1 scribe, 2 scrapers, 6 bogie drivers (3 on each side of scale).

No landing men, casers up, men rolling on scale, men pulling off scale, men rolling from hatch or men rolling

away from scale are required, as 3 bogies feed the scale directly from the ship's side, whilst the other 3 carry away from the scale.

*Undoubtedly a considerable saving is effected. At least 24 men.*

*Mechanical Transporters from Ship's Side to Scale.* Only used for bags constructed to feed 2 dealers and therefore 2 gangs. These further reduced each gang of porters by 2 stage-end men and the ship is affected to the tune of 3 landing men in each gang, or where 4 landing men were employed in each gang only 1 is employed.

#### The Reward of Abstinence

Students of economics will appreciate this interesting case of bonus shares which we lift from *Labour Press Service* (29/9/25):—

In a recent letter to the *Irish Times*, an original holder in Guinness said that in 1886 he invested £100 in stock of this company and has never increased his holding. In 1908 he received a bonus of a further £100 stock, increasing his holding to £200. In 1918 he received a war bonus of 20 per cent. in Five per Cent. War Loan (£40), which he sold for £39, and added to his dividend of £32, making £71 for the year. In 1923 he received a further bonus of 50 per cent. Ordinary Stock, increasing his holding to £300. The result of his original investment of £100 has therefore been:—

Dividends and bonuses ..	£1,169
Present value of £300 stock, about .. ..	£1,960
	<hr/>
	£3,129

#### REVOLUTIONARY LITERATURE

Will any comrade who has a good collection of leaflets, pamphlets, etc., issued by advanced sections of the working-class movement during and after the war, please write to Eden and Cedar Paul, care Plebs League?

Strike bulletins, Red manifestoes, etc., the Zimmerwald and Kienthal bulletins—these are the sort of literature that is wanted.

Pre-war matter not excluded, for instance, one or two copies of the famous "Green Pamphlet," issued in 1908 (?) by I.L.P. dissentients, would be useful.



## BOOK REVIEWS

## A LABOUR CLASSIC

*Socialism for To-day.* By H. N. Brailsford (I.L.P. Paper, 1s., cloth, 2s. 6d.).

An interesting variant of the game of Beaver to try on any gathering of comrades in the "over thirties" is to ask to what books they principally ascribed their conversion to Socialism. We tried it once on a very mixed gathering and 80 per cent said *Merrie England* and *Britain for the British*.

For putting in the hands of any intelligent non-Socialist of to-day Brailsford's shilling book is the goods. And every tired propagandist should give himself a mental clean-up by reading this masterly restatement of his case.

One cannot attempt to summarise Brailsford's arguments. The book is condensed so that every word counts, but that is not to say that it is dull. And the case is stated in an English so perfect that one's mind is swept along by the beauty of it, and one realises again that Brailsford is one of the great prose-writers of our time.

Frankly, one grudges so fine a writer to journalism. The first chapter of this book, in which the author illustrates by a few strokes the essential difference between Western civilisation and the peasant life of Russia or Turkey, makes one long for the great novel that this man could write.

PLEBS readers will agree more with the analysis of the Capitalist system than with some of the remedies—such as the Living Wage—that are rather sketchily proposed. In a shilling book it is inevitable that the constructive part should be sketchy. But in a society which will buy Beaverbrook's latest piece of pompous claptrap by the hundred thousand, Plebs might do a useful piece of work by spreading this Labour classic as widely as possible.

E. C. W.

## PETTY BOURGEOIS HISTORY

*Russia.* Nicholas Makeer and Valentine O'Hara (Ernest Benn, Ltd., 15s.).

The historical forces which led to the Russian proletarian revolution in 1917

were engendered when capitalism had developed fully matured Imperialism. As these forces require to be explained, not only from the viewpoint of capitalism on its economic side, but from that of the class-struggle, the national and international antagonisms, generated by the operation of the capitalist system, it follows that an impartial study of the said forces is practically impossible.

Nevertheless this book is supposed to give a balanced survey of the forces which have moulded contemporary Russia. The fourth of a series of volumes issued under the title of "The Modern World," its editor, the Right Hon. H. A. L. Fisher, M.P., proves in his introduction that he views the modern world through British bourgeois spectacles. He asserts that the Bolshevik doctrine of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat was made in Germany by a German Jew. The truth is that the theory was formulated in England by an exiled International Socialist who had renounced God, King and Country.

The joint authors of *Russia* are no less prejudiced than its editor against Marxism and Leninism. This is not surprising when one learns that Makeer belonged to the counter-revolutionary Social Revolutionary Party; and that O'Hara, employed in Russia by the British Foreign Office in 1919, was at one time in a Soviet prison.

The first five chapters of their study give an interesting survey of the pre-war development of Russia; the following chapters deal with the 1917 Revolutionary movement and the subsequent history of the Proletarian State. One can readily agree with the authors that the bad statesmanship of the Cadets, the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries led to the triumph of the Bolsheviks, and the creation of the Soviet Republic. Cumulative evidence, however, entirely disproves their statement that the political and economic policy of the rulers of the Republic is not only ruining Russia, "but is a menace to peace, order and economic stability in Europe."

Their assumption that the agrarian problem is the Achilles heel of the Soviet regime is probably correct.

Yet although Lenin tackled this problem with remarkable insight and able statesmanship no credit is given to him for initiating a policy which is paving the way for a successful solution of the problem.

Unfortunately the impression one gets from the authors' criticism of alleged Communist blunders and crimes is that the Russian people have taken a wrong turning by following the lead of the dictatorial Lenin and his fanatical followers.

There is a bibliography which includes Kautsky's *Dictatorship of the Proletariat* but omits Trotsky's *Defence of Terrorism*.

## SYL

## THE LAND

*The Tenure of Agricultural Land.* By C. S. Orwin and W. R. Peel (Cambridge Univ. Press, 3s. 6d.)

In recent years the number of advocates of Land Nationalisation has increased enormously: the Land Programme of the Liberal Party lately published at great length is a case in point. Messrs. Orwin and Peel in this little volume desire to enunciate their own proposals for land purchase by the State.

Most 19th century advocates of Land Nationalisation—and the late 18th century ones such as Spence and Paine—based their proposals on the ground of fundamental justice. "The truth is that there is no just title to an exclusive possession of the soil and that property in land is a bold, bare, enormous wrong, like that of chattel slavery." (Henry George, quoted p. 29.)

Our Oxford writers, however, base their advocacy not on justice but on expediency. "The proposals put up for consideration here have their origin solely in the breakdown of the landlord system, not in its iniquity; and nothing is further from their purpose than interference with private enterprise. Thus it is that the omission from State purchase of mines and quarries in operation or of mining rights sold bona fide is proposed."

Examples are given of how the value of the land is to be calculated (Income Tax assessment is taken as the basis) and the purchase is to be made by

means of "National Land Stock," which would bear interest at a rate comparable with the yield of other long date British Government Stocks. They estimate that a capital sum of £1,125,000,000 would be involved—compared with the increase of the national debt through the War "a relatively small transaction."

The authors proceed to discuss State Administration of the purchased land; decentralised administration under a new branch of the Ministry of Agriculture is proposed. County areas would be under a county land agent. Counties would be subdivided into districts under district land agents whose work "would resemble in all particulars that of the agent on any large private estate."

The authors next pass on to Forestry, and finish with a chapter on "Gains and Losses."

Students of Agriculture and Agricultural Politics will probably derive some benefit from a perusal of the book; its proposals may profitably be examined side by side with those of the I.L.P. and of the Liberal Party.

C. L.

## PLAYS

Plays for the People: *The Best of Both Worlds* (3 acts). By Monica Ewer. (3s. 6d.)—*A Place in the Shade* (3 acts). By Ian Rankine. (3s. 6d.)—*The Great Day* (1 act). By H. C. Fisher. (1s.)—*The Bruiser's Election* (1 act).—By Stephen Schofield. (1s.)—*Mrs. Jupp Obliges* (1 act). By Margaret Macnamara. (1s.) (Labour Publishing Co.).

We are constantly being asked by play-producing or play-reading groups to give advice as to worth-while plays. Here are the first issues in a series intended for Labour audiences. The most practical way of reviewing them will therefore be to say briefly how far we think them likely to interest Plebs groups.

Mrs. Ewer's is emphatically worth while—either to read or produce. It is essentially a play about the Labour movement and the types of people one meets in that movement. And though its principal characters are middle-class people, the conflict which is the central theme of the play is as much a reality to every intelligent

worker as it is to Mrs. Ewer's heroine. Mind—I am not saying that this play is another *Masses and Man*. But it is good.

*A Place in the Shade* is cleverish, and that is all. It would have made a good one-act play, but as it is it is boring.

*The Great Day* is much the best of the shorter plays. Excellent propaganda—easy to produce. (An "all male" cast.)

*The Bruiser's Election* is farce, and very thin farce at that. One hopes that it would prove an insult to the intelligence of any Labour audience.

*Mrs. Jupp Obliges* is mild fun, suitable for a side-show at bazaars.

J. F. H.

N.B.—Will readers note that we have just secured a further (limited) number of copies of the cheap edition of *Masses and Man*—price 1s. 6d. (1s. 7d. postpaid). A lot of comrades were disappointed last time—if you haven't yet got a copy of Toller's masterpiece, send in your order now.

#### DEFEATED VICTORY

*Defeated Victory*. By Marcel Sembat. Trans. F. H. Tucot. Intro. by A. Ponsonby, M.P. (Labour Pub. Co., 2s. 6d.).

Marcel Sembat, the veteran French Socialist who succeeded Jaures in the leadership of the party, published before his death in 1922 an old man's view of the world he was leaving. The Labour Publishing Co. have just issued a translation which preserves the delightful style of the original. Sembat saw the unity of the party he had lived for broken as a deliberate piece of policy by Moscow. He tries not to be bitter though he remarks "The bourgeoisie would have given ten millions for this division of the Socialist Party, had such a bargain been proposed," but he argues that Moscow by these tactics broke the weapon that could have helped her. Had the opposite course been adopted "Lenin would have attracted all the fractions to Moscow with the same care that he took to repel them." Whether that could have been or no, Plebs students who want to argue on either side of the communist controversy should read this very interesting book.

E. C. W.

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## FOYLES

121/5 Charing Cross Road, London, W.C.2

#### THE DIDLERS

*Britain's Food Rings*. By Harold T. Wilkins (Lab. Pub. Co., 1s.).

The man in the street, that patient soul who is credited, alternatively, with all the vices or all the virtues, knows one thing for certain, that he is "diddled" every time when he purchases his beer, his baccy, or his food. Even if one takes the most conservative working man, thickest-headed of his type, one finds that he has that idea carefully treasured.

It is not Socialist propaganda that has accomplished this. At one time or another, for their own purposes, some group of capitalists has "shown up" another group; and "when thieves fall out, honest men come by their own." So our friend in the street has come to realise the traffic that goes on, and the huge fortunes that are made, when he spends his meagre wages on the necessities of life.

This little book gives details that will provide points for speakers from many Socialist platforms. Here, private property stands condemned as inefficient and futile, a wicked waste of time and resource. Judged from entirely capitalist standards the traffic

in food is only "good business" in that many profiteers share in its plunder.

We read of fish flung into the sea, or used for manure, endless costly delay in marketing and carting green food-stuff, artificial "scarcity" and all the wicked dodges whereby these sharks of Capitalism feed on the workers.

The author presents his case in a racy style that carries one away; he wastes no time in rhetoric; he lets his carefully marshalled facts speak for themselves. And they do so adequately. In this good short statement of waste and futility, private property and private "enterprise," and incidentally private plunder, stand condemned for all time.

All workers should buy this excellent little readable economics textbook, and no Socialist speaker can afford to be without a copy.

W. H.

THE CONFUSIONS OF A CAPITALIST  
*The Confessions of a Capitalist.* By Sir E. J. P. Benn (Hutchinson, 18s.).

Sir E. J. P. Benn recently tried to gather from the readers of the *Times* details of books which justify the present system. Apparently dissatisfied with the response, he has undertaken the work himself, and the only drawback to this *apologia* is that its cost is equal to a week's unemployment pay, and so it will support capitalism as little amongst the workers as Godwin's costly *Political Justice* disturbed it.

To justify a *social* system Benn has written up his *individual* experience, with a serene blindness to any of the larger applications of his creed. He is, it is true, engagingly frank about some of his £10,000-a-year colleagues: "There are persons of my own class who are much more responsible than Karl Marx for the spread of revolutionary ideas."

Benn was able by family assistances, saving and accommodation bills, to set up as a publisher. As an *entrepreneur* he took part in other concerns, and up to date has been highly successful. What he has done all can do! There is to him no other way of running industry. Capital is saving and profit the small reward of great risk. Monopolies, economic and institutional, do

not exist. Wealth is exchange, and not as Marx said, "labour applied to land." [There are no references for this odd perversion.] Pareto has proved by logarithms that inequality of income is forever unavoidable; society is like piled-up tennis balls—perforce three at the bottom to one at the top.

These are a few of the medley of quaint ideas which are going to rehabilitate the capitalist. As a would-be individualist Benn abounds in inconsistencies: he is anti-trust yet delights in U.S. industrial methods; in favour of free and absolute competition, yet supports "price maintenance" for hardware. He justifies profits because of the losses of the exceptional firm. The Navy is paid for collectively and Benn made £1,000 in a week organising private enterprise trips to see it. Because an individual letter does not reach Bedford by the Post Office quicker than the mass distribution of general news in journals, the P.O. is to Benn a scandal. When he talks of risk he always thinks of the insurance broker and the city man rather than of those men on the footplate and in the mine who risk life daily from accident and explosion. War to him is a "costly blunder" and not the logical extension of the *risk* of winning foreign markets. The "free exchange" he glorifies means in practice lying puff paragraphs (to which he confesses), short weight, adulteration of food-stuffs and other practices from which capitalist society has to protect itself by collective action to make decent life at all a possibility.

If, as we expect, a cheap subsidised edition is issued, students will find therein many a specious argument for exposure, and ample evidence that even a relatively enlightened and progressive capitalist like the author is very far from understanding his own position.

M. S.

WORKING-CLASS HISTORY  
*A Short History of the British Working Class.* By G. D. H. Cole. Vol. I. 192 pp. (Lab. Pub. Co., 6s.).

This history covers the years 1789 to 1848. It goes without saying that it is a workmanlike book. Mr. Cole is an able research worker, with a long nose and a large library. The area

THE  
Labour Monthly

February

NOTES OF THE MONTH

Locarno and the Capitalist Offensive

KARL MARX ON CHINA

by D. Riazanov

CAPITAL AND LABOUR IN THE  
U.S.A.

by A. A. Purcell

THE I.L.P. PROGRAMME

by Emile Burns

THE LEFT WING

by W. Paul

THE MURDER OF GUSTAV LAN-  
DAUER

by Ernst Toller

Sixty Four pages

Sixpence

162 Buckingham Palace Rd., London, S.W.1

covered by this book includes the periods of the London Corresponding Society, the Reformers, the Owenite Trades Union and the Chartists. The account is not intended to be full, but it is clear, covers the ground well, and is generally unimpeachable as to matter. There are, it is true, no "peaks in Darien," none of those moments when a period of history springs suddenly to life, in the new light thrown on it by a historian of genius. But the path is well trodden, we must not ask too much.

I have two complaints: firstly, that the price is too high for the amount of actual type; secondly, that Mr. Cole's disdain for the meretricious aids of style is carried too far. It was quite a job to plough through the first fifty pages. Afterwards he is much less puritanical and condescends to show some interest. I don't know why he should assume this air of distant, donnish detachment—he does not do it in his ordinary writing.

Mr. Cole's muse of history is a good girl but plain, and not very exciting; her virtue is above reproach, and she will be a good friend to all students.

On certain points—as for example the small importance given to the Wilkes movement—I disagree with Mr. Cole, but these are matters of opinion. I note three slips for correction in a later edition: p. 60, "no prosecution of a master for the crime of combination ever took place" should read "no successful prosecution"; p. 66, the Watsons were not leaders of the Cato Street conspiracy; p. 73, the objects of the conspiracy (Cato Street) are given here from the police spy's evidence, as historical fact and without query. This is very, very doubtful—for myself, I think the "rebellion" story is rubbish.

R. W. P.

A HAZY PROPHECY

*Thrasymachus ; or, The Future of Moral:*

By C. E. M. Joad (Kegan Paul, 2s. 6d.).

At the commencement of this book, Thrasymachus, a Greek Sophist of the 5th century B.C., is discovered defending the idea that might is right, because the strong make the laws which the weak must obey. But who are the strong? Mr. Joad says that

in present-day democracies, the average man of the herd is really the stronger because he is greater in numbers. This herd has been kept in subjection by religion which promised later rewards for present hardships.

The herd, then, makes the laws. But as each member of the herd lacks the power or might to please himself in defiance of others, the idea of morality now flows from their collective envy of the man sufficiently talented or able to get his own way.

Herd morality delights in heresy-hunting, and requires everybody to conform to some general standard. This is puritanism. And since the old aristocracy is decadent, the successful business man of American pattern is the coming standard for the world herd, so we are in for a wave of American puritanism.

However, the greater numbers of women over men, their growing economic independence, and the practice of birth control, are contrary factors against which puritanism will stand no chance. Regarding the outcome of these factors, the author says "the changes they portend are incalculable."

But really in the end there is no morality, for "until the life force can contrive again to send a great religious teacher into the world, a true, positive

morality will be lacking . . . . meanwhile the less we think about morality the better . . . . those who think the least have the best of it" (p. 91).

Running over this précis, we notice that morality depends upon might, then upon envy, then upon the economic independence of women and afterwards upon contraceptives. So at bottom it would appear that the author has no particular basis of morality, nor does he seem to know anything about the forces which make it, except that "the changes they portend are incalculable," and this, notwithstanding that the book is supposed to be about the *future* of morals.

The final point is that by some means or other which he does not seem to understand, he has managed to write a book about something which he says does not exist, though how

he manages to speak of immorality without holding the concept of positive morality is a puzzle he does not explain. And then having smashed all his newest toys, he cries for some religious teacher to reach the old one (God) from the shelf where he himself had formerly helped to put it. Meanwhile we must "carry on" as before, so evidently he knows the book is no use to us.

Is he laughing at the public after selling them the book, or is it fundamental ignorance?

We confess to some slight indignation at having our time wasted in reading what does not rise to the level of a pot-boiler, and with all the warmth of our nature we recommend Mr. Joad to cultivate the role of student in this particular subject rather than that of expositor.

F. C.

## The NATIONAL COUNCIL of LABOUR COLLEGES

HEAD OFFICE—62 HANOVER STREET, EDINBURGH

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

**N**.U.R. *Labour College Scholarships*.—The following N.C.L.C. students and tutors have been successful in obtaining Labour College Scholarships:—H. G. Short, Birkenhead; J. Younie, Aberdeen; S. Wilson, of Middlesbrough District; — Foulger, of Netherfield District; A. Knight, Lydney.

*N.U.R.*—The recent ruling of the N.U.R. Executive in connection with affiliation fees to local Labour Colleges has provoked a large number of resolutions of protest. It is hoped that the position will be cleared up at an early date, but no doubt all N.U.R.-I.W.C.E.ers will do what they can in the matter.

The N.U.R. Executive state that in future the N.U.R.'s representative on the Labour College Board of Governors are to be members of the E.C. Messrs. Akurhursh, Binks and Pocock have been appointed under this rule.

*Labour College Parliamentary Can-*

*didate*.—E. C. Serell, an ex-Labour College student and a voluntary lecturer of the N.C.L.C. has been selected as a prospective parliamentary candidate by the Acton Labour Party. Congratulations!

*Labour College Miners' Agent*.—Hearty congratulations to an old L.C. student Jim Griffiths on being elected Agent for the Anthracite Miners.

*Summer Work, 1925*.—Reports on the educational work done last summer indicate that London Division did at least twice as much educational work as any other. Congratulations to the Division. The others will have to look to their laurels next summer.

*English C.W.S.*—The Directors of the C.W.S. recommended the societies to vote against the Blydon Society's proposal to grant £52 10s.—the same amount as is paid to the W.E.A.—to the N.C.L.C. Despite that recommendation the proposal received the splendid vote of 1,431 against 1,872. The Directors were apparently under

the mistaken impression that we had little or no connection with the Co-operative Movement. The substantial vote will have thrown an entirely new light on the situation. Hearty thanks to the Blaydon Society and all the other societies who supported the N.C.L.C. No doubt our Co-operative supporters will see that a similar resolution is down next year; it should have every likelihood of being carried.

*Electrical Trades Union.*—We hear unofficially that the E.T.U. is balloting on the question of an N.C.L.C. Educational Scheme. All our supporters are asked to do everything possible to ensure a successful ballot.

*Maesteg and District Miners' Scheme.*—This Union has arranged free access to classes in Division 4 in return for a payment of £1 1s. per hundred members. Congratulations to all concerned.

*New Local Affiliations (not renewals).*—The returns for December have not yet arrived in most cases. So far Liverpool L.C. comes first with six new affiliations, Ayrshire and Belfast come next, and are followed by Paisley, Abergavenny, Swansea, Wakefield and Stirlingshire, with one each.

*Week-end Schools.*—Colleges are recommended to arrange schools on the history and aims of Working-Class Education with the Horrabin's book

as the textbook. Copies can be had for 1s. 2d., post free, from PLEBS Office.

*Transport and General Workers' Union.*—This scheme provides a number of free N.C.L.C. correspondence courses. Applications should be made through Union Branch Secretaries and notice given to N.C.L.C. office.

*Lectures by Post for Study Circles.*—Ruskin College has been busy lately pushing its Postal Lectures among I.L.P. and Labour Party Branches. Will our supporters please note that we can supply postal Lectures on Local Government and other subjects? Particulars may be had in return for a stamped addressed envelope.

*What the Divisions are doing*

*Div. 1.*—The London Area has issued its annual report for 1925. 95 organisations affiliated during the year and 106 classes were conducted, the number of students being about 2,500. In addition 160 meetings were addressed. Is your branch affiliated?

*Div. 2.*—Guildford class had an enjoyable day school with Wynn Cuthbert. Congratulations to Eric Godfrey for his excellent address on I.W.C.E. John Knight is to give six lectures on Agriculture for the Agricultural Workers' Union at Dorchester. It is hoped that other branches will make application for his services.

**HAVE YOU BOOKED THE DATE?**

**—JULY 10th to 24th—**

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

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

**YOU MUST BE THERE**

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

There is a big increase in the number of members of affiliated unions taking up correspondence courses.

*Div. 3.*—Comrade Turner (an ex-N.U.R. Labour College Student) is in charge of Peterboro' Class on "Modern European History." Wind-sor Class is turning to "Trade Union Movement." Leonora Thomas is taking "Social Changes in Literature" at Grays. Luton started on January 27th a course on "Modern Problems" under H. W. Gardner. Will PLEBS readers note and bring the many local A.E.U. Members? Cedar Paul, J. F. Horrabin and J. M. Williams, have given assistance by a play-reading and meetings. Chelmsford and Braintree have small but keen attendances. Special circular has been prepared to assist in local affiliation campaign. Divisional E.C. confirmed arrangements for a Divisional Conference School. Secretaries are asked to intimate whether April 3rd and 4th or June 5th and 6th is judged the most convenient time. Brother Purser is making a special letter appeal to buck up the attendance of A.U.B.T.W. members. Norwich expects The PLEBS Editor for a Day School.

*Div. 4.*—Ogmore Vale Class (Tutor D. Lewis) has an average attendance of 65. As a result of canvass in the Miners' Lodges in the Ogmore Area, fifteen summer school scholarships are to be offered. The Merthyr Trades and Labour Council has arranged an Educational Scheme on "Local Government" with the N.C.L.C. in spite of joint efforts by Ruskin and the W.E.A.

*Div. 5.*—No report has arrived in time.

*Div. 6.*—The Conference and Week-end School held at Dudley was a huge success, and the whole local Labour Movement has now come right into the work of I.W.C.E. The class on "Industrial History" is going strong. In Birmingham over 1,000 delegates and visitors attended the Conference addressed by A. J. Cook and J. Stuart Barr. A resolution supporting I.W.C.E. was carried unanimously. The social and dance which followed was well supported and a very enjoyable evening was spent. The classes at Walsall, West Bromwich, Tyseley, Aston, Alum Rock, Deritend, Duddieston, Selly Oak, Dudley, Leam-

ington and Birmingham City have all commenced the new session and are being well attended. A class on Esperanto is being arranged. Stafford and Stourbridge classes will re-open in the first week in February.

*Div. 7.*—This Division held a magnificent conference at Wakefield, attended by nearly 400 delegates from West Riding and South Yorkshire Trade Union and Labour Organisations, and addressed by A. J. Cook and Organiser Shaw. The resolution in favour of N.C.L.C. principles was carried by an over-whelming majority, only two or three voting against despite the speech made on behalf of the W.E.A. The Conference received many columns of publicity.

We regret very much the loss the Division has suffered through the death of Jack Highley, who died at the early age of forty-four. He was an enthusiastic I.W.C.E.er.

*Div. 8.*—At a conference called by the Manchester Labour Party, E. Redfern spoke on "Education and Citizenship" as it affected the adult workers. The Manchester and District Labour College has arranged a series of public meetings, with well-known labour speakers, in addition to its classes. Amongst the lecturers are J. Jagger and W. J. Munro. Manchester has an excellent series of classes scattered throughout the city and suburbs.

*Div. 9.*—No report to hand so far.

*Div. 10.*—Dumfries' first Class has begun, the tutor being R. Holder. The secretary of the Glasgow L.C. Students' Association is T. Watson, 80, Bain Street, Glasgow. A. Woodburn (Edinburgh L.C.) gave a lantern lecture in Bo'ness, and staff-tutor Gibbins is running a class on "Routine of Business Meetings," in addition to those on the usual subjects. Edinburgh has arranged a series of Lantern Lectures by J. S. Clarke.

*Div. 11.*—Seven classes are now "full steam ahead" in the North. Subjects: Economics and the History of Trade Unionism. During the past month the Plumbers' Society and Central Branch of the Electrical Trades Union have affiliated to the Belfast Labour College on the 2d. per member basis.

*Div. 12.*—If our correspondence is



any guide, the N.C.L.C. has an energetic Secretary at Lincoln in C. B. Jarvis. Classes are in full swing again after the Christmas break. It would have been possible to commence more classes if more tutors had been available. This question of tutors solves itself very slowly, but we can look forward to a growing supply in the future. Supporters of the Labour College movement in Wellingboro' are looking forward to the Conference to be addressed by the General Secretary, J. P. M. Millar, in that town on February 13th. The Conference is being called by the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives. Chesterfield College is expecting much from the visit of George Hicks on January 24th.

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

- Div.* 3.—Windsor Labour College, Sec. : J. S. White, 53, Oxford Road, Windsor.
- Div.* 4.—Merthyr Labour College, Sec. : E. Harris, 10, Well Street, Cefn Cred, N. Merthyr.
- „ Ogmores Vale Labour College, Sec. : G. Green, 26, Dunraven Place, Ogmores Vale, South Wales.
- „ Abergavenny Labour College, Sec. : E. G. Smith, 3, Harringhay Terrace, Brecon Road, Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, S. Wales.
- „ Griffithstown Class Group, Sec. : C. Piper, 23, Sunny Bank Terrace, Griffithstown, Monmouthshire, South Wales.
- „ Bedwas Class Group, Sec. : A. Williams, School House, Bedwas, Cardiff, South Wales.
- „ Fishguard Class Group, Sec. : W. Price, 7, Victoria Avenue, Fishguard, Pembrokeshire, South Wales.
- „ Llandovery Class Group, Sec. : A. G. Lucas, 31, Llanfair Terrace, Llandovery, Carmarthenshire, South Wales.
- „ Hereford Class Group, Sec. : W. Stokes, 125, Widemarch Street, Hereford.

- Div.* 4.—Swansea Labour College, Sec. : R. T. Beynon, 5, Islwyn Road, Town Hill, Swansea, South Wales.
- Div.* 5.—Chard Class Group, Sec. : R. W. Long, 21, Park Terrace, Chard, Somerset.
- „ Lydney Class Group, Sec. : E. Allen, 13, Rushbylaze, Tutnalls, Lydney, Glos.
- Div.* 6.—Stourbridge Labour College, Sec. : A. E. Ash, 49, Grange Road, Stourbridge, Worcester.
- Div.* 7.—Sheffield Labour College, Sec. : J. Madin, 9, Bannon Street, Sheffield.
- Div.* 8.—Leigh Labour College, Sec. : Thos. Lowe, 2, Selwyn Street, Leigh, Lancs.
- Div.* 9.—West Cumberland Labour College, Sec. : D. Thompson, 58, Senhouse Street, Workington, Cumberland.
- „ Organiser Rees, c/o Mr. Moore, Co-operative Terrace, Durham City.
- Div.* 10.—National Secretary S.L.C., Scotland : A. Woodburn, 1, Viewforth, Edinburgh.
- „ Ayrshire Labour College, Sec. : J. W. Kerr, Galston Road, Hurlford, Ayrshire.
- „ Dumbarton Labour College, Sec. : Walter M'Donald, 28, Thomble Street, Renton, Dumbartonshire.
- Div.* 12.—Stamford Class Group, Sec. : H. Wade, 4, Newtown, Stamford, Lincs.
- „ Grantham Class Group, Sec. : C. Locke, 164, Dudley Road, Grantham, Lincs.
- „ Lincoln Class Group, Sec. : C. Jarvis, 33, Grafton Street, Monks Road, Lincoln.
- „ Long Eaton Class Group, Sec. : G. Cook, 23, Midland Terrace, Long Eaton, Nottingham.
- „ Stapleford Class Group, Sec. : P. H. Drew, 36, Nottingham Road, Stapleford, Notts.
- „ Nottingham Labour College, Sec. : Mrs. Skellington, 15, Petersham Street, Lenton, Nottingham.

# What PLEBS LEAGUERS are doing

*The New E.C.*

**T**HE Executive Committee election resulted as follows:—George Hicks 285 votes, Mark Starr 268, W. Paul 236, Cedar Paul 233, R. W. Postgate 215, E. C. Wilkinson 208, M. Philips Price 204; —M. H. Dobb 200, W. T. Goode 140, G. Phippen 91, J. Jagger 81, A. Pichowsky 75, J. Clancey 70. The first seven are accordingly elected.

We have had several complaints from members about not getting ballot papers, and we can only repeat that our membership file is composed of the counterfoils of the receipts for membership subscriptions. The moral is obvious!

Will any past or present (or intending) members of the League in SHEFFIELD write or see Comrade E. Bradshaw, 34, Tylney Road, who is willing to help form a group. PLEBS sales are not all they might be in this area, and the local Labour College will be grateful for any assistance; so there is work waiting ready to hand.

SOUTHEND group sends an encouraging report. Meetings are held in the Labour Institute, first Tuesday in each month at 7.45, and the secretary writes:—"Members are urged to attend and make the group what it was intended to be—a rallying centre for all class-conscious Socialists in the district, irrespective of what section of the movement they may happen to belong to."

The newly-formed SWANSEA Plebs Group is going ahead in fine style. All interested are asked to come along and make it a force in the locality. Miss Arnold, the secretary, will be glad to receive the names of new members and as meetings are held every Friday, there is plenty of chance to get into touch with the movement. Several public meetings have been held with very good financial results and more are planned for March and April. The secretary's address is Clifton Villa, Picton Terrace, Mount Pleasant, Swansea.

MANCHESTER, as usual, is in the forefront. The group has grown out of all recognition and has managed

to rope in many of the active workers in the movement. It is already helping to organise the Left Wing, and as well as running play readings and socials, it has a class for training I.W.C.E. propagandists who should prove invaluable to the N.C.L.C. later on. We are sorry we have not room to give a detailed report of our comrades' activities, but space forbids. We are, however, very grateful for full reports, which are exceedingly useful, even if they cannot be printed in full.

If there are any Plebs sympathisers or Leaguers whose subscriptions have lapsed in OTLEY, will they write to Comrade J. Leyden, 23, Western Lane? A class is being run in that locality, and our comrade is anxious to organise a group of Plebeians to assist the I.W.C.E. movement locally.

BOLTON group is having monthly discussions, and is also helping with the Left Wing movement in that area. The secretary reports some difficulty in selling PLEBS, but this seems to be fairly general. Not that our circulation shows any decrease; but it is stationary at present, due to a number of causes over which we have (more or less) no control. Our thanks are due to all our group secretaries and comrades who are doing their best to push the sales. There is a general slump at the moment in the sale of Labour papers, so that we must take comfort from that and keep on pegging away. We have just completed our most successful year yet, and even if there is a temporary lull we have a bigger and more active League. Keep on keeping on!—1926 will be our best year if we make it so!

W. H.

---

*Will any N.C.L.C. student attending a class where The PLEBS is not on sale kindly communicate with J. P. M. Millar, Nat. Sec., N.C.L.C., 62 Hanover Street, Edinburgh.*

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