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# THE PLEBS

*Organ of the National Council of Labour Colleges*

Vol. XX.

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## SPEAKING OF OURSELVES—

**T**HIS month's issue completes another volume—the 20th—of *The PLEBS*. To all those friends who, by their continued support and enthusiasm, have helped us reach this further milestone on our journey, we offer hearty thanks.

We are now busy making plans for the New Year.

The January issue (which, with luck, will be out rather earlier in the month than usual—in time for the re-opening of the classes) will most probably be a special number. Last month's issue, dealing with Rationalisation, was a big success, and we intend to bring out more such special numbers in the near future. Literature secretaries and organisers will be notified in due course, so that they can order their extra supplies.

The February *PLEBS*—our Twentieth

Anniversary Number—will be a bumper issue. Make a note of this now, and let your pals know about it.

We have another publishing announcement to make. A new N.C.L.C. shilling text-book will be on sale about the end of January. This is *A Short History of the British Empire* (with maps) by J. F. Horrabin. In size, format, etc., the book will be uniform with J. S. Clarke's *Marxism and History*, published last year. It is planned to serve as a text-book for the use of classes; but is also, we venture to think, an eminently readable book which every worker-student will enjoy. Full particulars next month.

P.S.—A. A. Purcell's article on "India," wrongly announced as included in last month's contents, will be found in this issue.

# THE MENACE OF INDIA

By A. A. PURCELL, M.P.

*Comrade Purcell, as Plebs will remember, recently visited India as one of the two representatives of the British T.U.C. to the Indian Trades Congress. In this article he records some impressions—and some reflections.*

**T**HE Port of Bombay is similar in many respects to the Port of London. There the same big ships ride at anchor: ships from all the world, and many hailing from the ports of Britain. There are the familiar scenes and sounds and smells of port life: the bustle, the noise and clatter, the hoots of sirens, the rattle of cranes that swing out from the warehouses, the swarms of dockworkers that move and scurry about the ships and docks—like armies of ants obsessed with herculean tasks—loading and unloading. It reminds one, as I say, of life at the London Docks, on a feverishly hot and brilliantly sunny summer's day—with a cloudless blue sky overhead, from which a blistering sun pours down molten heat. But there are differences—differences that force themselves on one's consciousness gradually. There are smells of the East, amongst other things. But what serves to remind one most of Bombay, instead of London, is that all the dock workers are *brown* instead of white. The workers, in their turbans and dhotys, are the most different element in the scene. That strangeness strikes one the most vividly. A party of Lascars, come upon suddenly in the murky gloom of Limehouse, appears equally as strange amidst the sordid grey-ness of the London streets.

Here, then, on the water front of Bombay is a fragment of toiling India. The Bombay dockworkers do the same kind of jobs as do the dockers in London or Liverpool. They do these jobs with similar energy and similar skill, adjusting their bodies to carrying similar loads. Their hours of work are, usually, from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., which means, after allowing breaks for meals, they are employed for about nine hours daily. The wages of dockworkers are at the rate of £1 7s. a month, or 1s. 0½d.

per day. Only about 1d. an hour is paid for overtime.

Behind the dockworkers in employment, there are swarms of famishing unemployed. It is estimated that never more than one-third of the available dock labour can find employment.

*A London docker will receive in wages for two days' work what a Bombay docker will get for a month's work.*

I have written this about Bombay because it is the first place of call: the gateway into India. It comes first as an illustration to India and Indian conditions.

## "Homes."

We could follow the London docker back to his dreary little home in Shadwell or Poplar, back into the tragic slums of dockland. Equally could we follow the Bombay docker back to the infinitely more gloomy, tragic, black hole of a hut or chawe in the frightfully insanitary native quarters of Bombay, where he dwells with his family and a packed crowd of his kin. What the London docker gets in wages enables him to maintain that dreary little home down Shadwell way. Is it possible to conceive the kind of home—overshadowed with hunger and plague—which the Bombay docker can maintain on the wages he gets?

The homes of the Bombay workers—of the Bombay textile workers—of the Indian workers generally — are indescribable. Little windowless huts with mud-plastered walls and earthen floors—not to speak of the hideous chawes—in which there is a litter of rags and a few metal pots, an absence of pure water supply, no conveniences or really sanitary arrangements—where men, women and children literally swarm, the old and young, the sick and well; cooking their meals, washing, eating,

sleeping; giving birth to babies and paying the last solemn rites to the dead; living out lives thinly held together by a little rice or ghee, always famishing, always on the border-line of starvation—such are these homes.

### Industrialising the East.

In regarding the Bombay dockworkers in this way, and in making such comparisons with the dockworkers of Britain, one can sense, as it were, the sinister menace of India.

India is in a state of transition. What is happening in India to-day is similar to what happened in Britain during the sombre period of the Industrial Revolution. Only there the rate of progress is much more rapid and the tremendous human drama is being enacted on a larger scale. The capitalism that is developing there is not the result of a process of internal economic growth, but is largely an imposition from outside. It is not the beginnings of capitalism, with individual employers and small concerns, as was the case in Britain more than a century ago, which are finding expression in India—it is the highly-developed capitalism of the trusts and combines and gigantic industrial concerns, being rapidly introduced into a vast territory occupied by millions of poverty-stricken peasants living, for the most part, under feudal conditions.

Historical research has made the facts of the Industrial Revolution in this country generally known, and in what manner it came to pass that there grew up in society great numbers of people who were divorced from the land, who were landless and beggars, with no property, no means to live, and who, in order to live, were compelled to crowd into the towns and the centres of industry to sell their labour to the capitalist employers. We know that those with only their labour to live by huddled about the mills, factories and workshops, offering themselves to the employers as best they could, as cheap as they could. We know that the Industrial Revolution was a period of hideous misery for the workers; a period of intense exploitation, of low wages, of industrial infernos

and slums and hovels. We know that then began the era of the growth of the large industrial towns—places like Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow and Sheffield—sucking in the human life of the countryside and swelling big with hundreds of thousands, even millions, of wretched proletarians.

The same process is going on in India to-day.

### The India which does Not Exist.

The prevailing opinion of India in this country is of a kind of circus cavalcade, with bejewelled rajahs riding on elephants, and bearded lancers on prancing horses, and veiled maidens, and surging throngs of white-robed and turbaned people, with the beating of tom-toms and the chanting of weird songs. That India of tinsel and glitter belongs to the fairy tale books. *It does not exist.* What does exist is a country where three hundred million people get insufficient to eat all the days of their lives. The vast majority of those people are agriculturists—tillers of the soil under primitive conditions. So primitive are those conditions, so hard is the lot of these land toilers, so barren and scanty are their lives, that they are the poorest people in the world. Their circumstances are little better than those of slavery. In places the conditions are actually those of slavery. In certain Indian States, where the rajahs exercise their sway as of old and indulge in the traditional pomp and splendour, a system of medieval despotic autocracy prevails. *Begar*, or forced labour, is common. *And that is slavery.* In other places, where the *Kamia* system prevails, hundreds of thousands of men are in debt to money-lenders or landowners to the extent of £3 (40 rupees) or less each; and consequent thereon they, their wives and children, and their children's children are the tied bondsmen or serfs of mere money-lenders or landowners for ever. *It is agricultural India which provides the drab and ghastly background to the whole picture.* The Indian industrial workers would not crowd into the centres of industry unless there were economic advantages in doing so.

The Indian wage-earners of to-day are



hideously exploited—even more so than were the wage-earners of Lancashire a century ago. But it is obvious that they would not submit to that terrible exploitation unless their previous condition was equally miserable or more so.

The large reservoir of Indian industrial labour is the limitless agrarian population.

#### Comparisons.

Taking each industry in turn the workers of Britain receive from four to twelve times as much in wages as workers in similar occupations receive in India.\* In the textile mills, in the iron and steel works, in the coal mines, in the engineering shops, on the railways, on the tea plantations, and in the Municipal services, the wages rates are so fantastically low that life would be impossible on them in this country. Yet the Indians are highly intelligent. They can quickly acquire skill. The wonders of Indian craftsmanship have been known for centuries. They can work, after the industrial training, as well as Europeans. Given even just a little more food, a few coppers a day extra with which to buy more rice, and their staying power at work will be equal to that of the white workers.

It must be borne in mind, as I have stated, that it is large scale modern capitalism which has seized India in its grip. It is Capitalist Imperialism, with its widely-extended plants and manufactories, its up-to-date machinery, its simplified labour processes, its latent methods and devices; and the adjustment of the physique and abilities of the Indian workers to this modern capitalism will be much easier than was the adjustment of the British workers to the early machine production of the Industrial Revolution.

#### The Future —

I have written of the sinister menace of India. Is it not obvious? There is, even now, a marked shifting of industry from the Western world to the East. Just visualise India, with its giant rivers, its immense natural resources, its timber, its coal and iron, its cotton and jute, its agricultural possibilities, when the present primitive

methods give way to modern ones. Just visualise that India become fully industrialised, as it surely will, with the workers swelling the size of Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and other towns, and calling into being Indian Londons and Birminghams and Manchesters—frightful Indian Metropolises with myriads of slum-dwelling wage-slaves.

*This is what is coming into being.*

Those Bombay dockworkers, toiling by the side of the Indian Seas, herald its approach, contribute to its coming. The industry of this country must shrivel in the face of that Indian competition. How can it survive against goods swamping the markets of the world produced by that cheap labour?

Unless —

*Unless the workers of India are organised, and are enabled to build up a great aggressive Trade Union and political working-class movement, and with those means are able to battle their way through capitalism, and to establish Socialism throughout the mighty Indian peninsula.*

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\* Facts and figures are given in the report on Labour Conditions in India, T.U.C., 1/-.

# JOSEF DIETZGEN

1828

1928

By FRED CASEY

*"This materialistic dialectic which . . . has been our (Engels' and Marx') best tool and our sharpest weapon, was discovered not by us alone, but by a German workman, Josef Dietzgen, in a remarkable manner and utterly independent of us."*

**T**HIS quotation from Engels' *Feuerbach* emphasises the fact that what Dietzgen taught is really a part of Marxism. For though Marx and Engels worked out materialist dialectics in nature and in history, and taught that men's thoughts are mental pictures of an objective and changing universe, they never worked out the dialectic of the thinking process. This gap was filled by Dietzgen.

There are, however, those who think otherwise. Lenin, for instance, thought that only from Marx and Engels can one learn philosophy. Others in our movement have suggested that Dietzgen should be put on the shelf, while others again have wondered whether "dialectic" as used by many Marxists means any more than "that blessed word 'Mesopotamia.'" Bearing in mind Engels' statement, such confusion among Marxists indicates that a re-statement of Dietzgen's principles is necessary.

Josef Dietzgen was born on December 9th, 1828. When in 1848 the people of Berlin conquered "liberty," the young Dietzgen wondered what it meant, because all the warring groups wanted liberty. But liberty for one group meant oppression for others. There was unity or agreement in their idea, but contradiction or disagreement in their practice. The peculiar point, however, was that both agreement and dis-



agreement were true, that is, they were facts. How, therefore, to explain this contradiction? How could truth contradict itself? That question led Dietzgen from politics to philosophy, and then to the theory of knowledge that bears his name.

Knowledge implies a relationship between a brain that knows and something that is known. The process involved is a physical one. Every brain, simply as a physical organ, thinks or theorises, but few have any method or theory of how to theorise. They just take things as being either one way or another, but cannot understand how they can be both ways at once. This is static (stationary or fixed) thinking.

On the contrary, the keynote of dialectic (changing or adaptable) thinking lies in knowing how a thing can be so, and yet not so, at one and the same time.

The universe, for instance, is one thing, but it is also millions of things. It is one and it is many. Now both these are obviously the same thing for the millions of parts make up the one whole. When looked at as being one, we call it "Absolute" because there is nothing left to which it can be related. Consequently, one of its parts, in so far as it is a part of the whole, must also be absolute, but to the extent that it enters into relation with other parts it has a relative character. It is therefore both absolute and relative.

Thought, while it acts according to its nature since it is part of a physical process, is unlimited in its capacity. It will mix with everything, for we can think of everything. On this account it may make mistakes. It may mix its mental pictures together in any way and imagine that stone

will burn, or that Socialism may come about through a change of heart, and without struggle. Indeed it may produce all sorts of profound or silly dreams, but unless thought pictures are a correct representation of the things thought about in relation to the purpose to be served, they will be wrong.

But as all things are continually changing we have no sooner said a thing is so than it has changed, and not only that, if taken in different relationships it will be two things at the same time. So from all the foregoing it follows that before sense can be made of anything its relationships must be made clear.

If a pencil falls to the floor, it is free to fall in the sense that nothing stops it, while at the same time it is not free because gravity is pulling it so that it cannot do anything else but fall. Human thought (in special reference to "the will") and action are both free and yet determined in just the same way.

Sitting in one's chair while the world swings along in its orbit is a case of being still in relation to the chair and yet moving. Static and at the same time dialectic. Each statement contradicts the other, and yet both are true.

Every existing thing truly exists and therefore is true. Truth, then, is only another name for the whole. But true understanding is that mental picture which reflects the general features within any given limits. If the limits are altered, so will true understanding be altered even to the extent of contradicting the previous true understanding.

For example, is the Universe mental or material? The Universe we know is made up of parts. One is called "mind," the others, by common consent, are called "matter." We have only the two terms "mind" and "matter"; so for the purpose of describing the total existence we include mind and call the whole material because this is its general character, mind being only one part among many.

Many have asked which rules the roost, mind or matter? The question is senseless unless the limits within which it is asked are defined. Mind is always connected with matter because thought reflects

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things. For the same reason also it cannot go beyond the material of its time. In this relationship matter is dominant. But when mind mixes its mental pictures and evolves new material forms it becomes to this extent the active partner. Mind and matter, then, are both active and passive at the same time because when viewed as a whole they are interactive.

But is mind (which in this connection is often taken to mean the superior reason of the intellectual minority) not the dominant partner in social progress? To the extent that mind (the technicians of production) takes part in changing the mode of production, it contributes to historical progress because it helps in providing new material forms of production. These give rise to different and opposite material interests, reflected in the formation of correspondingly different social groups.

Not, however, until the new productive processes are widespread do they produce appreciable results. Then they act as material forces quite uncontrolled by their inventors. They become the general or greater factor, the inventiveness becoming the special or smaller one. Consequently,



since the general gives the true understanding, historical progress is correctly described as material progress, with the technical mind playing an important though subordinate part, and the intelligence, as such, playing a very much smaller part. (Of course in other relationships the latter may play great parts, but that is away from the present question.)

Now, as to the nature of mind itself: The thought say of a hat, has a special character because it pictures a hat. It differs from other thoughts because they picture other things. But all thoughts, whatever be their special pictures, have the general character of being thoughts, and mind is the name given to this general character of

all thoughts after mentally putting on one side all their special mental pictures. Mind is generalised thought.

This explanation of mind is consistent with our general description of **brain work**, and is an answer to the idealist who affirms mind without being able to explain it.

Dietzgen's theory of how to theorise may be applied in all forms of brainwork, philosophical, political or any other. If this article convinces anybody that Dietzgen is worth study, not just for the purpose of armchair time-passing, but as a help in the class struggle, inasmuch as it is "our best tool and our sharpest weapon," its purpose will have been served.

## ORGANISED LABOUR IN BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES: A COMPARISON

By MARK STARR

**M**ANY of us in the Labour Movement in Great Britain have looked at trade unionism in U.S. through the eyes of Daniel de Leon, whose pamphlets denounced fiercely the "A.F. of Hell" and all its works. Here are two books\* which serve as correctives and make an interesting comparison with development here. Mrs. Beard's book is a modest and non-committal record, overshadowed by appreciation of Mr. Gompers. Apart from this her book serves as a useful introduction to American Labour. Mr. Saposs has gleaned from records and speeches valuable expressions of opinion upon almost every phase of the trade union movement and classified them in an illuminating way. A similar anthology would greatly help students of trade unionism in Britain.

The great differences in the general situation in Britain and America are obvious enough. English workers were never hin-

dered by such a great and diverse immigration as that which until the War took place in the U.S.A.; the similar use of country workers to lower English standards is not to be compared to the unassimilated groups of nations to be found in U.S. with their differing languages and customs. (Not less than twenty-five languages are used in American unions.) It must not be thought, however, that the "foreign born" were the unfit and misfits of their mother land. The political refugees again and again endeavoured to influence by Socialist and Anarchist bodies the development of the American Labour Movement. These efforts were premature and in effect caused the main body of organised Labour to advance less quickly than it would have done spontaneously. Then the great size of the country is an obstacle to national unions; in many matters the States have local autonomy and the position of the unions vary considerably. The A.F. of L. has never been more than a loose federation with what was called in English development a Parliamentary Committee. Imagine what advance will be necessary before a

\* *A Short History of the American Labour Movement.* By Mary Beard (from the N.C.L.C., 3/6).  
*Readings in Trade Unionism.* By D. J. Saposs (from N.C.L.C., cloth 8/6).

General Council will be able to administer and lead a trade union area as large as Europe. Organisation was delayed because of the chances in the U.S. of "going West" to find land; there is no "covered wagon" in English development. Absence of feudalism and of the grip of the dead past gave industrialism—when it did begin—chances of rapid forward strides into mass production, Fordism and "company unions" developed by the far-sighted employers. U.S.A. now enjoys her period of expansion on an Imperialist scale without having yet to pay the full costs.

Yet in many respects there are parallels between trade unions here and there. In the eighteenth century, before the War of Independence, there were only benevolent societies in U.S.A. After the separation from England there was a boom in industry and by 1785 the printers, shoemakers, tailors and carpenters had established defensive craft organisations. There was never any Act passed to prohibit them or to define the powers; these continue even until today to be decided by the courts. As early as 1806 the judges decided to make the union *methods* liable to prosecution, leaving their existence unchallenged. Then followed various swings of the pendulum from pure and simple trade unionism to political agitation and co-operative and Socialist experiments. Agitation for the Ten-Hour Day was notably begun in Philadelphia in 1827, and it was conceded to the Government employees in 1840. There is nothing, however, to compare with the English Chartists, because early in the nineteenth century the property qualification for the vote was abandoned. Instead of a more or less conscious class use of an increasing political power, even now the A.F. of L. works on the policy of "reward your friends and punish your enemies" amongst the capitalist parties.

The hours' agitation promoted central Labour bodies in the larger towns, but failure attended the attempt to unite them nationally. National craft unions of the cordwainers, printers, combmakers, carpenters and hand-loom weavers were formed 1835-6, but could not weather the crisis of 1837. When the unions failed there were

several agitations against monopoly and aliens and Fourier agrarian colonies were suggested by the quantity of land available. The Californian gold rush created a boom and the unions revived and continued through the disturbed days of the Civil War. This was followed by industrial expansion, to aid which "contract labourers" were imported from Europe, whose first wages were earmarked for their passage money. The number of unions grew in 1864 from 79 to 270, out of which 32 were national. Membership by 1872 had reached 300,000. Very much as the English craft unions joined the First International to prevent the import of blacklegs, so did the American National Labour Union, in the person of W. H. Sylvis, try to use it to protect American craftsmen from cheap immigrant labour. This union linked together the city trade assemblies; it was conciliatory in its policy and divided by various elements advocating industrial and political action, co-operative workshops and currency reforms. Exclusion of Chinese workers, assistance to negroes, and an eight-hour day for Federal employees, were among its achievements.

Contemporary with this body the First International had eight local branches, with 293 members, chiefly among the refugees who later formed the short-lived Social Democratic Party. It was in New York that the final struggles between the Socialists and Anarchists occurred and the First International ended.

Six years of depression following the crisis of 1873 hit the unions severely. The national unions decreased from thirty to nine, and the New York membership, for example, from 44,000 to 5,000. Clashes occurred between strikers and police in the anthracite areas—the first of many such—and the Federal troops were used against railroad strikers at Pittsburgh. The secret society, the Knights of Labour, became active at this time. Formed in Philadelphia in 1869, it held a national convention in 1875. In it there were trade union elements and it was active in strikes. It advocated public ownership of utilities and co-operative workshops, and hoped to unite all workers without distinction of colour or

craft. Its secrecy was dropped in 1881 in face of attacks and its sabotage in strikes was denounced. The American Federation of Labour weaned away the trade union support and the Knights disappeared in the 'nineties.

Ten years passed before there was any attempt after the breakdown of the National Union to unite the unions. But a Federation was begun in 1882, which declined until it was replaced by the American Federation of Labour in 1886. Gompers became and remained its president (with the exception of one year) until his death in December, 1924. Membership grew from 150,000 to 300,000 by 1899, reached 3,050,000 in 1919, and added a million in the following year. This was the peak period of strength and it rapidly fell to below 3,000,000, at which it seems to have stabilised since 1924. Including the four railwaymen's organisations outside the A.F. of L., and other smaller unions, there are at most only three-and-a-half millions of the twenty-five millions of U.S. wage-workers organised. Up to recent vicissitudes the hard coal miners were strongly

organised, and the Socialistic International Ladies' Garment Workers was a powerful union.

From the writings and speeches of Mr. Gompers there can be gathered praiseworthy passages on the cause and future of Labour; he accepted theoretically "the ultimate abolition of the wages system." But for all practical purposes it was the craft workers inside the capitalist system which mattered. Conciliation and co-operation with the employers in the National Civic Federation (a body similar to the British Industrial Alliance of Employers and Employed), long term agreements and opposition to direct and political action were distinguishing features. The A.F. of L. had attacked the revolutionary Knights of Labour—which had stood for *class* organisation—and in conjunction the attacks of the Pinkertons brought it to an end. Resolutions were passed advocating government ownership of telegraphs and other utilities or their regulation by the State, but there was no active campaign to secure this. Even in the "giant-power" agitations of 1923-4 Gompers opposed

## KARL MARX' CAPITAL

TRANSLATED BY EDEN AND CEDAR PAUL

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Books that have made history are few and far between, but Marx' "Das Kapital" is emphatically one of them; its influence has been almost incalculable, not merely on people's thought but on their actions. This great work has hitherto been available only in a somewhat unlitary translation made from the third German edition, which was not the final edition. This new English version is based on the fourth and definitive edition, revised by Engels after Marx' death, and is the work of translators of outstanding reputation who are also very competent Marxian scholars; the result is a rendering at once readable and scholarly.

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public ownership and only supported "full and public and industrial accounting" of the proposed hydro-electric corporation. Just as the British unions organised the votes of their members, so did Gompers, and in 1908 Bryan was backed to get the injunctions against the unions limited. When in 1920 the Farmer-Labour Party candidate, Parley Christensen, was run, Gompers supported the rival Democratic candidate for the presidency. It was only to punish the orthodox parties that Gompers in 1924 endorsed La Follette, the Progressive. In the recent Presidential elections the unions were still divided.

During the War the A.F. of L. energetically supported the Government's policy. Mr. Gompers was active in hunting down war-weariness and Bolshevism. Although U.S.A. has since refused to participate in the League of Nations, Gompers assisted in the formation of the I.L.O. and the calling of the Washington Conference. Alongside capitalist Pan-Americanism the A.F. of L. endeavoured to link itself up with the Mexican unions, although it continued its refusal to join up with the I.F.T.U. because the latter was too advanced.

As in Britain the War speeded up the entry of women into industry, one-and-a-quarter millions being employed in war industries alone. Somewhat similar to the onetime Federation of Women Workers here so in 1903 there was set on foot the Women's Trade Union League to lend general assistance to the organisation of women. The A.F. of L. has a special women organiser and women members are sent by the unions to the A.F. of L. conferences. Since 1920 some of the unions in the A.F. of L. have admitted negroes and have special organisers. Willy-nilly the attacks of the employers by injunctions, "yellow dog contracts," company unions and "open shop" campaigns may force the A.F. of L. leftwards. At present it is as if the Taff Vale Judgment had not been reversed and minimum wages had been declared illegal in Britain. An independent Labour Party is being discussed by some trade union journals; workers' education has begun to spread. (See PLEBS, October, 1927.) Contrary

## THE SUPER OPTIMIST!!



### A BRIGHTER VISION FOR BRITAIN'S WORKERS.

In the past the trade tools of British carpenters, machinists, masons, factory hands and others have successfully been hammered into plowshares in Canada—why not the miner's pickaxe?

(From *The Daily Star*, Montreal.)

tendencies to this are the development of trade union banks (twenty-three doing business and twenty more planned by 1923)—investment, house purchase and erection activities by the richer unions—functions which in this country are in part covered by our Co-operative Movement. The United Mine Workers, the largest single union in the A.F. of L., however, has declared for government ownership of the mines and the burning question of who shall control "giant power" (i.e., great sources of water power) will force public ownership to the front. Norman Thomas and Maurer, the two presidential candidates, were keen supporters of this.

Structurally there is no uniformity in the A.F. of L. The unions are chiefly national and international (i.e., operating in Canada) craft unions, although the United Mine Workers includes all coal workers and there are local general unions linked up to it. For administration there are five

departments, one of which has to settle demarcation disputes between the unions. The E.C. consists of the president, eight vice-presidents, a secretary and treasurer, all elected by the annual conference to which delegates come on the ratio of one to each 4,000 members. The history of attempts to organise industrially arise from a survey of the chequered growth of Socialism in U.S.A.

Before the branches of the First International, referred to above, the Owenite colony of "New Harmony" had been started in 1825, and like the agrarian Fourierist attempts, failed. The Social Democratic Party of 1874 represented the first serious attempt to introduce Marxian Socialism, but after it had tried to influence the Knights of Labour it provoked such fierce attacks that it was very soon abandoned. The Socialist Labour Party (1877) enjoyed a longer life, but a waning influence according to its presidential vote (14,000 in 1916). The Socialist Party (1900) was more advanced and wider in its influence. On the industrial side there arose in 1905 the I.W.W. which again divided in 1908 on the question of political action. The De Leon Detroit faction, later known as the W.I.I.U., did not exist long. The continuing anti-political section in 1912 numbered 30,000 and by 1924 had only increased to 37,600, chiefly amongst the migratory workers. Centralisation of

legislative power in the Federal Government has been a factor in the decline of the I.W.W. Further cleavages were caused by the War between the pro-War and anti-War Socialists. The Communist Party was started in 1919 and this too has suffered from internal troubles. It is now known as the Workers' Party.

In opposition to the I.W.W. policy of leaving the A.F. of L. Unions, W. Z. Foster and others ran the Trade Union Educational League which was an attempt to unite the radical elements to bore from within. Later on he and the T.U.E.L. became identified with the Workers' Party. Echoes of the fierce struggles to capture and retain control over the unions—particularly in the clothing workers' unions in New York—have been heard this side of the Atlantic. Many of the American unions have already expelled Communist members and sympathisers.

Minor points of comparison between the two movements are that the Federal (Civil Service) employees and the numerically weak teachers are part of the A.F. of L. In the absence of any scheme of unemployment insurance the clothing workers' union, in conjunction with the employers, have organised a scheme. Company unions, welfare work, employee shareholding, open-shop campaigns, have struck deadly blows at American trades unionism which is now at a very low ebb.

## HISTORY FOR BABBITS

By W. T. COLYER

**A**DVERTISEMENT-WRITING is in many respects the most significant and most characteristic form of contemporary literary effort. More time, trouble and money are expended in perfecting its technique and in analysing its results than are devoted to any other sort of writing. Its use in political and religious propaganda is now openly avowed.

Ordinary commercial advertising is frequently described by enthusiasts as "educational"—in the sense that it "educates" the

buying public to ask for this breakfast food or that temperance drink, in preference to competing products of a similar character. Most of the enthusiasts, however, would agree that the restricted and specialised education thus given is quite a different thing from the process to which the "educator" by profession submits his or her pupils.

In general, the task of the latter is to prepare the way for what we may, for convenience, call the educator by advertisement. The normal school course supplies

the world with a mass of persons characterised by a few nationalistic and reactionary prejudices, a profound abhorrence of any prolonged or coherent mental activity, and a general proneness to believe anything they see in print, provided it be short, snappy and well illustrated. A large part of modern advertising is addressed to a public having a mentality of this description.

### "Selling" America.

Dr. Hendrik van Loon in his book *America*,\* has demonstrated the great possibilities of applying advertising principles in the field of history. From the dedicatory page, on which he mentions "that rare virtue which is among the greatest gifts our country has thus far bestowed upon a pretty sad world—UNDERSTANDING KINDNESS," to the final chapter expounding the doctrine that "our nation, our country, the fortunate strip of land which we call our own, by a strange turn of fate has been called upon to be the guardians of mankind's future," our historian is all out to "sell" America to his readers.

Let no one suppose, however, that the intervening pages are all fulsome eulogy. Your up-to-date advertisement-writer is far too clever for that, and Dr. van Loon is a veritable master of the craft. With engaging candour he draws attention to many a spot on the sun, but he invariably leaves the impression either that the spot is fast disappearing, if not already gone, or that the accompanying effulgence is so glorious that the spot doesn't really matter.

He has, for example, a good deal of sympathy for the Indians, who are now out of the way and whose wrongs can be quite safely bewailed without hurting any 100 per cent. American's feelings. A quotation from the instructions of General Amherst to one of his subordinates in 1732 gives a good idea of the spirit in which our ancestors took up the white man's burden. Here it is:—

You will do well to try to inoculate the Indians by means of blankets in which smallpox patients have slept, as well as by every other method that can serve to extirpate this execrable race. I

\* *America*. By Hendrik van Loon. (George G. Harrap & Co., Ltd., 10/6 net).

should be very glad if your scheme of hunting them down by dogs could take effect.

"But what are ethical principles pitted against the laws of nature?" as Dr. van Loon enquires after recounting similar misdeeds at a later date. "Such cruel incidents seem to be an unavoidable part of the White Man's progress across the face of the globe."

### Making it Pretty.

The book as a whole is a series of chatty essays, just such as might be strung together in a "history of the product" for some great manufacturing firm. Witty phrases and good stories are plentiful. A great show is maintained of imparting information, but at the end no more has been told about the essential factors governing American development, past and future, than is revealed about a manufacturer's trade secrets in one of his advertising brochures. Black and white drawings—a few of them really helpful, almost all arresting and agreeable—are inserted every few pages, and the volume is adorned with no less than a dozen striking coloured illustrations. The object seems to be to create an atmosphere of goodwill towards the author's subject, on the principle adopted by the makers of toilet articles, cigarettes, etc., when they seek to associate their products with pleasing pictures in poster form.

All this is important as indicating the plan and method of the book which are both admirably adapted to the needs of the Babbitts to whom, doubtless, it will represent the last word in courageous impartiality and constructive criticism.

### Victory for the Analytical Mind.

The "great man" theory is also well in evidence. We get chapters headed: "General George Washington of Fairfax County, Virginia, puts on his old uniform"; "Mr. Thomas Jefferson, of Albemarle County, Virginia, shows the superior advantages of a classical education"; "President James Monroe pays his compliments to the Holy Alliance and Simon Bolivar starts out to found a New World"; and others of the same kind. It is even suggested (p. 376) that the outcome of the Civil



War depended on the personal qualities of Lincoln and of Jefferson Davis :—

The President of the Confederate States did not have that beautifully-patterned analytical mind which allowed the President of the United States to go straight to the heart of any question, without being diverted by a mass of non-essential details. As a result (for in conflicts of such nature the analytical mind is bound to win out with almost mathematical surety) the United States survive to this day while the Confederate States have been relegated to the museum of historical curiosities.

Yet despite nonsense like the foregoing—and there is plenty of it—Dr. van Loon has succeeded in producing a very lively and attractive—though from a Socialist point of view, a very dangerous—book. Our quotations have admittedly shown him at his worst. At his best he is a capable descriptive writer and provides a modicum of really shrewd comment. Many less sensible things than the following (notwithstanding the detail that only a fraction of his final 40 per cent. run any risk of being hanged) have been written on the subject of revolution :

Now, revolutions (I believe I have said this before in another book) are usually made up according to the following pattern :

Ten per cent. of the people are willing to hang for their principles.

Ten per cent. are willing to hang, but are not particularly happy at the prospect and therefore wish to know if the purpose for which they are fighting cannot be achieved in some less violent fashion.

Forty per cent. (who call themselves "practical" men) sit on the fence until they know which side is going to win, when they join the army of the victors.

That makes a total of sixty per cent. The other forty per cent. believe in "law and order" at all costs and either execute their former neighbours if these happen to be unsuccessful or themselves get hanged if it is proved that they have guessed wrong.

Fortunately the price will prevent Dr. van Loon's book from getting into the hands of many working-class readers who might be misled by his numerous lapses into absurdity, as when he claims that the slavery issue was "moral rather than economic," that "slavery had been condemned for hundreds of years by all decent

### A "Loony" View of Politics

"It almost seems as if there were seasons in the realm of politics, as there are in the domain of nature and in the fields of fashion. Spring follows upon winter, long skirts succeed short skirts, a period of government by the rich makes room for a period of government by the poor; and try however they may, no farmer, no dress-making establishment, no statesman has ever been able to alter this normal course of events."

Hendrik van Loon in *America*.

men and women," and that interest "in the ideals of Jesus" was an important factor in its abolition. His lack of comprehension of the underlying causes of social change, which he actually compares, in one place, with the inexplicable changes in the fashions of dress from season to season, is almost beyond belief.

To him the French Revolution is a "blood-thirsty upheaval" (p. 135) which was attended by "bestial cruelties committed by a starving and neglected people upon those whom they considered their tormentors" (p. 256), and of which the upshot was that "one class had lost everything and the other had gained nothing" (p. 275). The United States to-day are "a pure democracy" (p. 357) and the Americans "were able to do in fifty or sixty years what it had taken others forty or fifty centuries to accomplish" (p. 415), and "we seem to be the only land blessed with a constitution that will work" (p. 244).

Such little asides will no doubt do their deadly work in the minds of the grown-up children for whom they are intended, but they are not so blatantly forced upon the reader as to put his back up. Both the "boosting" and the "knocking" are done mainly by implication, as we should expect from a really scientific advertising man. Britons come in for some humorous and well-deserved smacks in such remarks as that Washington and his advisers "had seen enough of the English professional officers not to fear them over-much" (p. 103), and

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that British officialdom "had treated their American subjects. . . with a display of that haw-hawing geniality which will arouse even the meekest of us to murder" (p. 176). Others, such as that the English colonists "had a clear vision of the almshouse in which they were born, of the pauper's grave into which the body of their mother had been dumped. They never forgot the pangs of hunger, the beating which they had received while their father was in a debtor's prison" (pp. 167-170) are examples of Dr. van Loon's general "slapdashness" when writing of conditions in distant Europe.

The volume, however, is a portent. More of the same sort, but at lower prices, may be anticipated. When they arrive, they will need to be countered—a circumstance which emphasises the need for increased support to the Publications Department of the National Council of Labour Colleges.

## COMMUNISM AND COAL

By J. G.

**T**HIS book\* may be taken as representing the authoritative policy of the C.P.G.B. both for the Mining Industry and the M.F.G.B. It is divided into two parts. The first (by Hutt) is an analysis of the economic position of the mining industry; the second (by Horner) presents a review of the miners' organisation and its problems.

The first part traverses familiar ground and sets out in a fairly comprehensive manner the factors which have brought the industry to its present tragic plight. As a monument to the "efficiency" of capitalism, the mining industry is unparalleled, and Hutt makes good use of the case against capitalist ownership and control. Having done that he passes on to discuss the various remedies that are being put forward. He analyses the attempts of the owners to secure some measure of stability by the

\* *Communism and Coal* By G. A. Hutt and Arthur Horner. (C.P.G.B., 2/-).

adoption of Price Selling Associations, both here and in Germany. He seems to rely too much upon the past history of the industry when he dismisses the possibility of a European Agreement on the ground of the hostility of the various national groups of competing owners.

One of the consequences of the "ruin" of the industry is that the *nominal* owners are all in pawn to the banks and financiers. The swallowing up of defaulting concerns in South Wales by big combines like the P.D.'s, *with capital advanced by European financiers like Schroeder's, shows how the industry is passing over to the control of Finance Capital.* These financiers, with their fingers very deeply in the European pie, have the strongest of motives for rationalising this industry, and they are in a position to impose their decrees upon the hostile nominal owners. Hutt attacks the Labour Party's Nationalisation scheme because it involves compensating the present owners. He advocates nationalisation without compensation. We do not think his plea that the industry could not bear such compensation would stand examination; we believe it could be demonstrated that a reorganised and revitalised nationalised industry could stand the charge and at the same time give the workers a free higher standard of life. I believe one could prove that from the facts of the waste of capitalist ownership provided by Hutt himself in his earlier chapters.

In the second part of the book Horner writes with his accustomed vigour. He examines in detail the present organisation of the M.F.G.B., and the "reactionary"

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leaders come in for the usual slating. He reveals the typical C.P. mentality of plot and counter-plot and seems (as I heard it put the other day) "far more concerned in capturing the machine than in making a machine worth capturing."

He develops the argument for One Miners' Union as the essential preliminary to the successful waging of the struggle for the miners. Even in this one suspects that he prefers the One Union to Federation, because the *centralised* control which One Union involves will be more easily captured than the *diffused* control characteristic of the Federation. It is also to be noted that this diffused control gives the *rank and file* far more control than does the centralised One Union.

## RATIONALISATION

### What "Plebs" Readers Think

**S**IR.—Rationalisation, so admirably described in W. Meakin's book in its most characteristic manifestation in Germany, is evidently beginning to receive some measure of that analytical study by Labour College enthusiasts which its immediate importance demands. The election, as Supreme Executive of the United States, of the greatest of all practical exponents of the new theory, requires that prolonged and intensive examination of this new idea shall be undertaken.

Whilst in Washington it was my good fortune to have a conversation at the Department of Commerce with Mr. Hoover on this very matter of the application of science to production and to consumption problems of industry. His enthusiasm and his grasp of the question were enlightening. A man of tremendous "drive" and immense understanding of the development of the basic industries of capitalism the world over, the coming of Hoover to the head of the American Empire is the outward and visible sign of the inauguration of a new and exceedingly active epoch of economic evolution.

The time has come not only to ask ourselves what we should "do" about Rationalisation, but seriously to set about the examination of its causes.

Old applications of Marxian theory such as we arrived at, not out of our mystical concepts or by reason of the more rapid pulsations of our hearts at the eye sensations of human misery, but because we had come to the conclusion that capitalism was in an imminent condition of collapse, can in altered circumstances have no Marxian merit. Superstition is not the less but rather the more contemptible when it wears instead of the trappings of the churches the garb of the scientist.

Therefore, let us stop measuring reality by our own yard-sticks of prejudice and preconception and

This plea for National Unity on the industrial field is followed by an *amazing* plea for the *splitting* of the miners' political force. Horner seriously pleads (p. 291) for "*a free selection (by the miners) of Miners' M.P.'s and the backing of the M.F.G.B. for such candidates as are selected whether the Labour Party is prepared to support them or not.*"

So we are to have One Miners' Union running miners' candidates of varying political shades—Labour in one constituency, Communist in another, and, presumably, Liberal or Tory in another!

And this is the "authoritative" advice of the C.P. to the M.F.G.B. in a book dedicated to the "Militants!" Shades of Marx and Lenin!

go to look at industry, intent only to see how it is developing, how fast and in what direction.

When we know that, if we are Marxists, the rest needs only industry and intellectual honesty.

Yours fraternally,

WALTON NEWBOLD.

Dear Comrade,—S. B. M. Potter says:—"If we ignore all the changes bound up in the application of science to industry we confess to futility, and weaken our hold on the masses. If we oppose rationalisation it will come in spite of us and. . . to the extent that we succeed in delaying its advent we condemn the workers to a continuation of poverty."

He goes on to urge support of rationalisation, because "its achievement holds the hope of better wages, shorter hours, less unemployment, etc."

This shows clearly that Potter ignores, or is not aware, that the cause of the poverty of the workers is production for profit, and that freedom from poverty can only be attained by the complete abolition of the system. This demands the *Socialisation* of the means of production.

Is it true that, as he asserts, there are only two alternatives? Decidedly not. Three courses of action are open to the working class movement. We can (a) support, (b) oppose, or (c) adapt our organisations to the change that is taking place.

To support Rationalisation would be to assist the capitalists to increase our own exploitation. To oppose the inevitable is futile. There remains the policy of adaptation.

We shall have to point out to the workers that our existing industrial organisations are totally inadequate to meet the changes taking place, that they do not reflect the existing material conditions. The chief task confronting the working class, and the task made more essential by the adoption of rationalisation is Industrial Organisation. It demands a change from the basis of craft to one of



industry. This is the real power of the workers and it has been too long neglected.

Yours frat.,

J. H. ROCHE.

Dear Comrade,—Comrade Colyer would like me to give an article or series of articles summarising my point of view on the present industrial situation in Europe and this country. I have spent over a year trying to do this in a book on which Aaron Director, in *The PLEBS*, has made certain rather vague criticisms. No wonder Comrade Colyer is a little at sea. All I can do to help him is to ask him to read the book again, for the best answer to Aaron Director is there. Incidentally if he will induce any friend or friends of his to buy the book and read it, he would greatly oblige.

Yours fraternally,

M. PHILIPS PRICE.

Dear Comrade,—The doughtiest champion of private enterprise gave us recently on the wireless a real good Marxian lecture on large-scale production (leaving out, of course, the Marxian exposition that this method of production was being forced upon him by economic events, and his advocacy was entirely in the interest of profit). But one doubts whether even Lord Melchett, combined with the T.U.C. General Council, will bring rationalism into British industry.

Immediately after the war we found what large-scale production did exist was killed by the predatory instincts of both employers and men. During the war these instincts had been encouraged rather than suppressed—fifteen per cent. on wages meant that there were very few workmen who lost time, and the death-rate for workmen was never so low.

In the circumstances I urge "Rationalisation," not because I believe in any freely-given prosperity for the workers, but because it will bring us more closely together. Workshop committees of "safe" men will discuss demarcation, workshop hygiene, workers' welfare, etc., not in any revolutionary spirit, it is true; but what will emerge will be the naked unshamed company union. Definitely we will then know our position, and be forced to study "Rationalism" as a remedy against Rationalisation.

Yours frat., W.J.D.

Dear Comrade.—I find the "Rationalisation" number of *The PLEBS* very interesting. The article by Miss Wilkinson deals with the main point—will the workers gain by rationalisation? I think not.

The article on Ruskin merits attention as being a short study of the relationship of an outstanding literary figure to the working-class. More of the same matter or articles in the same vein would be valuable. What relation does the work of Carlyle bear to working-class problems?

Which brings me to a remark of Mr. Jackson's which must not be allowed to pass. This is the contention that Marxism implies that civilisation is the result of external forces, and does not depend at all on the "inner urge." We will leave out the

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"mysterious" for the time being. It is futile and against all commonsense to pretend that the human reaction to environment is not the decisive factor in moulding history. How else can we understand the Russian achievement? It is obvious that identical environment does not induce the same reaction from different individuals or different groups. How else shall we explain the fact that even yet large numbers of workers vote Liberal and Tory, not having learnt that they have souls to save, let alone knowing the way to save them? Let us all plainly understand that the environment provides the opportunity, and it is for us to use our creative power to remould it nearer to the heart's desire.

Yours fraternally,

L. J. HUMBERSTONE.

## A WORD TO THE WISE

"The new issue of *Education for Emancipation* is splendid and is indispensable to every I.W.C.E.er. Armed with it our supporters should state a good case for I.W.C.E.; without it they will miss much." So writes an old N.C.L.C.er in ordering six dozen. Have we had your order?

# AMONG THE BOOKS

By

## "PLEBS" REVIEWERS

**T**HE *Cause of the Crime*. by Leonhard Frank (Peter Davies, 6/-) is not a popular detective story, written to tickle the jaded palate of Edgar Wallacites. It is a very beautiful and serious psychological study.

Leonhard Frank is a German proletarian who, unlike most proletarians, is quite articulate about his struggles and his sufferings. The story is the story of a poet-soul in a worker's body, crushed by life, starved and, at last, driven to murder, not for material gain, but by a deep-rooted resentment against a wrong done him in his early impressionable days.

*The Cause of the Crime* lies not on the surface, but deep in the soul of the so-called murderer. The starving poet, returning to his native village, sees his one-time schoolmaster ill-treating a little boy. His own humiliation under similar circumstances becomes so vivid in his mind that in a moment of rage (the logical outcome of years of subconscious brooding on that humiliation) he kills the schoolmaster.

"What harm had he done me? He'd done me no harm—beyond what most people, most adults, do to children."

The rest of the book describes the poet's thoughts before his execution.

Such books as this which map out in detail the twisted, curious nature of the human soul when subjected to material and psychological degradation, in a way that is easily understood, are contributions not only to science but also to the great living epic of the working class. W.H.

Every Socialist requires to know how the Government of the country works through its administrative machine, and the *Outlines of Central Government*, by J. J. Clarke (Pitman, 5/-) certainly fills the bill. Parliament, the Ministry, the Empire, Local Government, Public Utilities, the Judicial System, and Public Finance are all dealt with.

The one serious criticism that might be made is that it is a pity such a useful book should be marred by political opinions being made into principles of Government, e.g. :—

"Public action should not stifle private enterprise." "The State should not enter upon undertakings of a speculative character. . . It is in the power of Government to prevent much evil; it can do very little positive good in this or perhaps in anything else."

I am sure Mr. Clarke, himself, on reflection, would be the first to reject the principles he quotes. There are any number of private enterprises Government must stifle, from burglary to sweated labour. In

regard to his second principle, Capitalism to-day is making the Government enter all the speculative undertakings and collecting the "enterprise" when they have proved successful. There are necessary enterprises so speculative that only the Government can undertake them. And surely to quote Burke's opinion as a principle of Government is to suggest that nothing has changed in over one hundred years.

It is worth while indicating these points because ever so many able people accept and repeat Capitalist policy as if it were a law of nature. I trust Mr. Clarke will remove any unconscious propaganda of this sort when the next edition is published. The book is well worth 5/- in spite of this item. A.W.

*Slovakia, Past and Present* (by C. J. C. Street, King & Son, 1/6) describes clearly and, I think, fairly the problems and difficulties connected with the setting up of Czecho-Slovakia, and more particularly with the more backward Slovak portion of the new republic. But, however much the Slovaks may have been repressed by the Magyar in pre-war days, and whatever minor difficulties may exist at the present moment between Czechs and Slovaks, questions of self-determination and the rights of minorities, cultural and linguistic questions do not appeal to readers of *The PLEBS* with the greatest force. I quite agree with the writer, however, when he says "the surest way to a complete understanding of the past and present Slovakia is to visit the country." I did so in 1924 and learnt more Economic History from my three weeks there than from all the text-books put together. For there, before my eyes, was the Manorial system still in full working order: with its open fields, common pastures, labour and produce rent and sumptuary customs all complete, village communities as nearly self-sufficing as possible; peasants paying in labour and produce a rent six times as great as they would have had to pay in cash; instead of diagrams, the actual field strips stretching for furlongs over the low hills; and yet, in sharp contrast with all this mediævalism, the Yankee-English of returned Slovaks who were to be found in almost every village. If only Slovakia were more accessible it would prove an excellent site for a Summer School.

The griefs of Hungary are fairly well ventilated to-day; but the Magyars in Czecho-Slovakia are very critical of the conditions in their mother country, as is shown in the following extract from the organ of the Magyar Social Democratic Party in Czecho-Slovakia:—"In Hungary the working class masses even to-day are forced to put up with the suppression of their political views, and laws are still being passed without their consent by deputies who have obtained their mandates by the terrorism prevalent at the elections. In Hungary the agrarian population is still unable to organise itself for the protection of its economic interests, because every complaint is at once silenced by armed force, imprisonment and the arbitrary proceedings of the judicial authorities. In Hungary the only Press organ of the working class has for

several years been banned from the streets of the Magyar capital and every free expression of opinion in the Magyar Press frustrated by abundance of Press laws involving heavy fines and terms of imprisonment." Have we here the reason for Lord Rothermere's championship of Hungary?

F.J.A.

*The American Labour Year Book* (Rand Book Store, \$2.50) is a storehouse of information regarding the American Labour movement and its many problems. The main sections deal with Industry, Labour, Social Problems, the American Farmer, the Courts and Labour, Civil Rights and American Foreign Relations.

M.

For some time now the *Positive Outcome of Philosophy*, by Joseph Dietzgen, has been out of print. This month sees the hundredth anniversary of Dietzgen's birth. The publishers (Kerr & Co.) have issued a new and centenary edition, translated by W. W. Craik (430 pp., 10/9 post free from the N.C.L.C.). The *Positive Outcome* deals with the nature of human brain-work. As a special article on Dietzgen appears elsewhere, it will be sufficient to say that the student who *masters* (and does not simply learn its phrases by heart) *The Positive Outcome* equips himself with an intellectual weapon of the greatest value.

M.J.

The "dismal science" of economics is having a rough time. It has been seized upon by numerous popularisers who have put its substance into understandable English and have, worse still, actually made it interesting. Norman Angell has taken the process a step further by making a game out of economics (*The Money Game*, Dent, 12/6). Perhaps the introduction of the game into Workmen's Clubs and Institutes may pave the way for classes in economics.

M.M.

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# OIL AND WAR

By T.A.

Students of Imperialism are familiar with the contrast between the politics of Cotton and the politics of Steel. Is it now necessary to complete the trinity, and to add to those the politics of Oil? Can we say that for the future, any possibility of war over coal and iron fields—like that waged on the Western Front during the years 1914-1918—is definitely past, and that the next World War will be waged for the control of the sources of the world's oil supply? That is the question which must occur to every student in reading the latest book on the influence of oil upon politics.\*

Modern international power is economic, says our author. The nation which controls oil and other raw materials, foreign markets and credits, will rule the world. Thus oil diplomacy—like the diplomacy of "other raw materials, foreign markets, and credits"—is determined by industrial, commercial and military considerations. Thus

one sees that this oil war is not important in itself. It is significant only as part of a larger struggle for world mastery between two great economic empires. Seen alone it seems fantastic, impossible; against the background of the wider conflict it appears tragically inevitable. There would be no serious oil war had not America suddenly grown into an empire threatening Great Britain's long commercial and naval supremacy.

It will be seen therefore that Mr. Denny's conclusions as to the inevitability of war—unless averted by circumstances which he evidently considers highly improbable—depend upon the degree of indispensability of oil for modern world-power. And this is itself a debatable point—not, as he appears to assume, a matter of course. But, on the other hand, the mass of evidence of the constant conflict proceeding between the antagonistic interests, and the part played by the respective Governments, may be regarded as sufficient proof, how indispensable oil is. And certainly this evidence seems conclusive enough.

Mr. Denny in this book is, indeed, more concerned with the facts of the politics of oil than with controversy—but the facts speak eloquently for themselves; he relegates argument and deduction to a very minor place—but his data are so significant that, while he who runs might read, even the most cursory must surely be given pause. Thus the great value of the book lies in its admirable documentation, which leads him to the conclusion that Britain and the United States "are now in combat on the economic fronts of the world."

\* *We Fight for Oil*, by Ludwell Denny (Knopf, 7/6).

The British Government itself, through its ownership and control of "the most aggressive company in this international competition," is directly involved. And this competition is already shaping diplomacy and shaping policy.

Rightly or wrongly, we are actively preparing for the Anglo-American war which our naval men believe will be fought to determine commercial supremacy. The American people are now less opposed than formerly to such preparedness against Great Britain.

Our author takes in turn the several oilfields which are the scenes of the struggles—Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Mosul, Roumania and Russia—and traces the development of the Anglo-American conflict in each, adding oftentimes new and valuable material in exposing the operations of the principal companies and personalities. But while the story is told with an eye to the comedy as well as the dangers of the conflict, the outstanding thing is the marshalling of the evidence.

And yet we still doubt. For Mr. Denny's book is after all not quite up to date. By a curious irony of coincidence, the English edition had barely got into circulation when we were informed of the completion of the combination of the three British oil trusts, and of an alliance between the British combine and the Standard Oil Company, formed with the avowed object of closing the world markets to Soviet Russia and thereby eventually controlling the rich Soviet oil-fields. This object, we read, is to be achieved by arrangements with anti-Soviet Governments for preferential tariffs and anti-dumping regulations making Soviet oil prohibitive in price; or, where that is not possible, by a murderous price war.

The plan is said to have wide political and diplomatic significance in forcing Soviet Russia, by cutting off one of its chief means of revenue, to come to terms with capitalist Governments regarding the questions of expropriated property, debts, and of diplomatic relations. (*Sunday Times*, 7/10/1928).

"It is understood in the City that the attitude of the big American company, the Standard Oil of New Jersey, to the Alliance of the English concerns is conciliatory, and that no price-cutting will eventuate."

It appears, therefore, that even those seemingly unappeasable powers—the British and American oil trusts—may bury the hatchet in face of the common danger from Soviet Russia.

But though our author may tend to see "oil over all" in Anglo-American industry, diplomacy and warfare—to the exclusion of other equally or even more vital factors of conflict—this formidable mass of evidence merits the attention of every student of modern Imperialism and its probable outcome in the immediate future.

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## SCIENCE AND SUPERSTITION

SIR A. Keith, as President of the British Association last year, caused much fluttering in clerical dovecotes by his remarks upon human origins. One learned bishop suggested in reply that there might well be a ten years' holiday for scientific investigation to show how little it mattered. This year's president, Sir W. Bragg, in his address broadcasted widely by the radio, was at some pains to quieten the ruffled ecclesiastics. From much that he said about the dependence of modern society upon science one could not dissent. His references to the scientific worker and craftsman being the go-between for an effective combination between Capital and Labour and to the development of new industries as a cure for industrial depression and crises were somewhat naïve. The illustration which he gave to show the effectiveness of the trained scientific mind on the spot concerned only the detection of German guns.

## Now Ready—The Positive Outcome of Philosophy

By JOSEPH DIETZGEN (New Translation by W. W. Craik).

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But to reassure those who thought that science destroyed reverence and propounded a "mechanistic world," he dwelt on the greatness of knowledge still unknown. It seems that two theories exist concerning the nature and transmission of light—one dating from Newton, which treats light as a stream of corpuscles, and the other assuming that it is a wave motion in ether. The former cannot explain satisfactorily interference with and diffraction of light, while the "wave" theory cannot explain the photo-electric effect. Both are being used at the present time, although a later theory, which will probably supersede both, is in the making.

Sir W. Bragg suggested that in the research laboratory the scientist treated the world as mechanistic, in which cause and effect could be clearly traced, but other theories could be and were used outside at the same time and by many scientists. The analogy is obviously misleading because both "corpuscle" and "wave" theory are mechanistic in principle. Neither contains animistic or spiritual interpretations of the phenomena of light. It was disappointing to put it mildly to find this convenient dualism applauded by Gerald Gould in the *Daily Herald*.

## PUBLICITY IN THE LOCAL 'RAG'

By M.S.

Everybody affects to despise "the local rag" yet almost everybody reads it. It goes out into the villages and the reports of the weddings, christenings, Band of Hope outings and Sunday School anniversaries are all pored over by the women folk during the ensuing week. Lots of Labour people buy it "to find out what's going on locally," but few take advantage of the publicity it affords. Such bodies as the Reconstruction League know how to distribute their letters and sometimes even offer editors a stereotype of an article ready for use.

There is not the slightest reason why trade unions and particularly our local classes should not

### How to recognise a Revolutionary Period

"... during such periods of great popular excitement there are wheels within wheels and spies that spy upon spies and still other spies that spy upon the spies that spy upon the spies and it was quite impossible to maintain a secret."

Hendrik van Loon in *America*.

## PLEBS LEAGUE and N.C.L.C. STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

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### OBJECTS:

To secure publicity, in every possible way, for the I.W.C.E. movement and The PLEBS. Local groups to organise efforts of any suitable kind. Central funds to be devoted, after meeting net expenses, to advertising The PLEBS.

supply news. If a conference to start classes is being held the local Press should be invited. If it is not represented a short summary of the proceedings, with names of local chairman, committee, secretary, etc., should be sent in "for favour of insertion." Pick out some arresting sentence from the speaker's address to lead off, e.g., "It is better to grow brains than throw bombs."

In some areas even accounts of class lectures have been inserted, especially when they have some local colour. "Sky rocket oratory" and cheers for Social Revolution will be turned into the w.p.b. of course, but if a local branch affiliates or the class gives its teacher a gilt teapot, the world should be told. If the local people learn to connect the class with *human* beings and not think of it as a sort of inner circle of secret revolutionaries like film Bolsheviks, the College publicity agent has made a good start.

Then there are letters. "A scrap" in the local papers always secures attention. We have known cases where the same person wrote both sides or argued with a pal. But of course it has to be hitched to something in the paper itself.

Every local College should have a publicity agent. The first efforts could be scrutinised by the teacher to weed out faults, say, in grammar and spelling where necessary. Don't say it can't be done until you've tried. And remember the Bible story about the unfortunate widow and the judge. Even unsympathetic editors can in time be persuaded to publish news about our movement.

Those who wish to equip themselves effectively for publishing work will find the N.C.L.C.'s Correspondence Course in English and Article Writing of great value.



## WORKERS' EDUCATION IN SWEDEN

At the S.A.T. Conference at Göteborg in Sweden reports were given on workers' education. These reports, including that from the N.C.L.C., appear in the printed account. Not the least interesting was the description by E. Eriksson, M.P., of Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund (A.B.F.) which has already been widely broadcasted by the Esperantoseruo. A.B.F. was founded in 1912. There are affiliated to it unions with 501,307 members; Co-operatives with 339,273; political parties with 200,498; youth groups with 36,236 members and 9,200 worker abstainers, making a total of 1,086,964. Obviously there are individuals who belong to more than one organisation and so are counted twice in the total. Organisations pay yearly 5 ore (nearly 1d.) for each member and, although the Communist Party is affiliated, the A.F.B. also receives a State subsidy. In the year ending June 30th, 1927, the A.B.F. income was derived as follows:—51,681 kronen\* by affiliation fees, 110,074 kr. from the State and 33,420 kr. from local authorities. An E.C. of six members guides the association and the country is divided into divisions, each under a leader. The more important towns set up separate branches and get further monetary assistance from local town councils and help from the local unions. The students paid 86,831 kr. in class fees in 1926-27. Nine hundred and thirty-three libraries were run and used by 2,390 classes or study groups with a membership of 29,893. Lectures amounted to 1,931, listened to by 31,643 people. Six special schools from ten to fourteen days in duration were also arranged.

Apparently Local Government, with 342 classes, was the most popular subject; 314 classes took literature; 287 studied Trades Unionism; 213 studied Swedish. Foreign languages are also taught; English with 128 classes in 1926-27 and 155 in 1927-28 leads, but Esperanto by going up from 65 to 149 appears to be challenging the lead. Only 42, two and two groups respectively studied German, French and Russian.

There are often attacks on the A.F.B. and threats to remove its State financial support, but the Labour majority is strong enough both nationally and in the big towns to counter the attacks successfully.

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## RE-READING HISTORY

There is no doubt that, if the N.C.L.C. were rich enough to finance original investigation and research in history, some valuable re-readings of history would be made. In the main, however, we still draw upon Harold Rogers, Cunningham, Ashley, Dr. Coulton and other authorities for the facts, the differences we make being only differences in emphasis and interpretation.

The *Economic History Review* (Black 10/6) issued annually by the Economic History Society, is the very best means we know of keeping abreast of modern scholarship and every local College might well make it available to its tutors, directly or through the public library. It lists all important articles and books within its scope. Noteworthy contributions to the current issue deal with the teaching of economic history in the schools, with notes on books used, and a long survey of *Russian Work on English Economic History*. In the latter we find that not only did Vinogradoff work out the parallel between the *mir* and the Anglo-Saxon village, but that other Russian writers have written books on Wat Tyler's Rebellion and the Tudor village and that one has investigated the agrarian conditions of the seventeenth century and published a biography of John Lilburn.

There is much yet to learn about the proletarian layers in the English Revolution and it looks as if we shall have to translate the history of the Levellers and Diggers out of Russian just as the first history of Chartism appeared in German. Certainly in the English department of the Marx-Engels Institute our lecturers would find a fruitful field of investigation.

## RESIDENTIAL STUDENTS AT THE LABOUR COLLEGE (LONDON).

Students who entered the Colleges in January last:—

Anson, J. T., N.U.R.; Batstone, H., T.U.C. (Transport and General Workers); Brown, I. T., S.W.M.F.; Campbell, T., T.U.C. (Boot and Shoe Operatives); Eke, H. B., N.U.R.; Hughes, J., S.W.M.F.; Latcham, A., S.W.M.F.; McLaren, I., N.U.R.; Nixon, T. E., N.U.R.; Phillips, P. R., S.W.M.F.; Pinguey, J. H., N.U.R.; Rowlands, L., N.U.R.; Rutherford, W., N.U.R.; Thomas, A. C., S.W.M.F.; Thomas, D., S.W.M.F.; Thomas, D. J., S.W.M.F.; Thomas, E. G., S.W.M.F.

Students who entered the College, September, 1928:—Brewer, E., T.U.C. (S.W.M.F.); Bryan, E. R., A.U.B.T.W.; Gale, G., T.U.C. (Transport and General Workers); Gameson, W. E., T.U.C. (N.U. General and Municipal Workers).

The Dyers' scholarship is held by Comrade Corrina (Halifax).

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

**T**O all I.W.C.E.rs the Season's greeting from the N.C.L.C. office. May next year see a big advance in the work of the movement! To insure it, involves the exercise of our backbones as well as our wish-bones.

By the 15th December circulars giving particulars of the January classes should be in the hands of all Labour organisations and of all old students. A special circular should, of course, be issued to branches of Unions with N.C.L.C. schemes and references should be made to the free Correspondence Courses.

As we are changing our printer, we have had to cut the N.C.L.C. page this month. The following reports, therefore, are feeling very sick following on severe amputations.

LOCAL AFFILIATIONS (new, not renewal): Sheffield, 4; Liverpool, 3; London, 3; Southampton, 1; Division 5, 1.

### DIVISION 1.

New classes have been fixed up for Battersea, Biggin Hill and Hayes. Twenty Branch lectures were given in November. "Rationalisation" and "Banks and the Worker" continue to be the most attractive subjects. The November discussion on "The Role of Bias in Social Science" provided much useful discussion, although some members got in a "pickle" owing to dietetic bias! We are very sorry to learn that J. D. Thom remains ill.

### DIVISION 2.

The Croydon secretary reports a successful fund-raising whist drive. Comrade Barrow states that the Moordown class is increasing its members and sales of literature. Lantern lectures are to be given at Littlehampton, Bishopstoke, Eastleigh, Southampton, Woolston, Totton, Portland, Moordown, Swanage and Newport. The fund has had a good lift with substantial donations from Portland, Southampton and Oxford A.U.B.T.W.ers. The new class at Bishopstoke has now a twelve PLEBS order. They are arranging a dance for the lantern fund. Guildford is arranging a social evening for January 2.

### DIVISION 3.

At Maldon the new class thrives. Thanks are due to C. Gilbert. Southend class is examining "Rationalisation." It has an active Students' Association with Sunday evening lectures by T. P. Sinha, Ivor Montague, Harry Pollitt, J. P. M. Millar, Maurice Dobb and W. J. Brown. A. E. Bright and the Brentwood comrades did well in organising the debate on "Industrial Peace" between Jack Jones and Mark Starr. First Class Publicity appears to be the aim of Staines.

### DIVISION 5.

Bristol College has sustained another great loss in the death of Comrade R. Neft, following a pain-

ful illness. Comrade Neft was a very keen and capable supporter of the N.C.L.C. The new classes at Chippenham and Swindon are making progress, and two new affiliations have been secured in Swindon. Plymouth College has secured the services of Comrade Hipwood. Dr. Bushnell, too, has undertaken to render all possible assistance. Following an address from the Organiser, the Plymouth Trades Council decided to make a grant.

#### DIVISION 6.

The Birmingham College is arranging for a conference early in the New Year. A special effort is being made for new affiliations and a number of organisations have responded to our offer to send a speaker to explain the work of the N.C.L.C. A Plebs League and Students' Association is being formed.

#### DIVISION 7.

The Divisional Conference at Sheffield on November 10th, with A. J. Cook and Wm. Paul as speakers, was attended by 203 delegates from 75 organisations. The Hull Demonstration on the 11th was crowded out and an overflow meeting had to be arranged. A class of twenty-six students was the result. The University class upon Marxism having fallen a little flat, the people responsible desire to arouse interest by a debate with the N.C.L.C. Arrangements are now proceeding. William Paul and a real live Professor are to be the protagonists.

#### DIVISION 8.

**SOUTH-EAST LANCS.:** Fred Shaw will be the lecturer to the Manchester Students' Association on Sunday, January 13th, at 7 p.m. The last monthly meeting was attended by eighty students when J. Hamilton gave a lantern lecture: "The Economic Causes of War." We have well-attended classes in the Rossendale Valley, thanks to those who have assisted.

**LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT:** A class has commenced in Great Crosby—an entirely new district. A Speakers' Class will be held in conjunction with the Liverpool T.C. and L.P. in January. The Walton Divisional Labour Party is taking "Modern Problems." A member of the Liverpool E.C., Mrs. D. E. Fletcher, has been elected to the Management Committee of the Birkenhead Co-op. Society. The movement has lost a staunch supporter in the untimely death of Mr. J. A. Loftus, the Liverpool Organising Secretary of the Plasterers'.

**NORTH LANCS. AREA:** Preston has suffered a very great loss with the removal of A. W. Field to Lancaster. His place has been taken by our old comrade, Mrs. C. S. Taylor. Not only have lantern lectures raised finance, but they have also created interest in class work. The Nelson Class has eighty students and the Students' Association is continuing its rambles and its lectures. The dramatic group is to produce its second play. Attempts are being made to begin a class in Blackpool. All interested are asked to write, A. L. Williams, 17 Burlington Street, Blackburn.

#### DIVISION 9

The North-Eastern College is running a series of conferences. The Darlington College feels the

## What 2d. will do

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temporary loss of Comrade Berriff, who met with such a serious motor accident and is in hospital. The old Middlesbrough Class has been revived with Frank Lewis as tutor. The Durham College is still forming a new class at St. Helens Auckland.

#### DIVISION 10.

The Scottish Divisional difficulties of the last few months are satisfactorily solving themselves. Glasgow and district is now well under way and for the January to March session, twenty-seven classes have already been arranged. Classes are also established in Stirlingshire. Affiliations are also coming in satisfactorily. Aberdeen is progressing. Edinburgh has arranged twenty-two classes for the incoming session and details of arrangements in Lanarkshire will be published later.

#### DIVISION 11 (IRELAND).

Mrs. J. T. McCoubrey has commenced our Shorthand Class in Belfast. The Organiser gave two lantern lectures on *Engines of War* and *Footprints of War*, in conjunction with the Belfast I.L.P. The next lantern lecture of the series will be given by Frank Nolan on *Splendours of the Heavens*.

#### DIVISION 12.

Wellingborough regrets that Comrade Drage, who has acted as secretary of the College since its inception, has been compelled to relinquish the post. Comrade Stevenson is his successor. New classes will commence in January in Grantham, Kettering and Worksop. The services of Comrades Bull and Crispin have been greatly appreciated.

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