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# THE PLEBS

AGITATE EDUCATE ORGANISE

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THE PRACTICAL  
IMPORTANCE  
of the  
SOCIAL SCIENCES

*By N. Buharin*

WANTED :  
The MARXISM of  
MARX !

*By J. T. Murphy.*

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*Annual sub.—One Bob*

# THE PLEBS

*I can promise to be candid but not impartial.*

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## The PRACTICAL IMPORTANCE of the SOCIAL SCIENCES

The following introduction by N. Buharin to his book, *The Theory of Historical Materialism*, will be of interest to the I.W.C.E. movement, since it contains, in concise form, the main theoretical grounds which underlie and justify the existence of the movement. It may possibly also have some beneficial effect for any readers who have not yet been able to rid themselves of the bourgeois prejudice of the W.E.A.er, *viz.*, that education is the same for the millionaire and the navvy. The translation is from the authorised German translation of Dr. Frida Rubiner, and has been made for The PLEBS by W. W. Craik, Principal, Labour College, London.

- (1) *The Fighting Needs of the Working Class and Social Science.*  
 (2) *The Bourgeoisie and the Social Sciences.* (3) *The Class Character of the Social Sciences.* (4) *Why Proletarian Science Stands Higher than Bourgeois Science.* (5) *The Different Social Sciences and Sociology.*  
 (6) *The Theory of Historical Materialism as Marxist Sociology.*

**T**HE *Fighting Needs of the Working Class and Social Science.*—When bourgeois professors begin to talk about a science they speak of it with an air of mystery, as if it were something which had its birth not upon earth but in heaven. But, in reality, every science grows out of the needs of society and its classes. Nobody counts the flies upon the window or the sparrows upon the roof. But one does count cows and oxen. The first is of no utility to anyone. But it is useful to know the second.

It is, however, not only useful to have a knowledge of nature (from the constituent parts of which we obtain all kinds of materials, instruments, etc.), but it is just as much a matter of practical necessity to have a knowledge of society. The working class in the course of its struggle finds itself faced with the necessity for such knowledge. In order to be able effectively to carry on the struggle with the other classes, it must foresee how the classes will conduct themselves. But in order to be able to foresee this, one must know upon what depends the attitude of different classes under different circumstances. Before the working class has acquired power it must live under the yoke of capital, and in its struggle for emancipation it has constantly to reckon in advance with the question of how this or that class will conduct itself. To this end, it is necessary to know upon what the attitude of the classes depends and in what way this is determined. Here we have a question that only social science can answer.

After it has captured power, the working class has to fight with capitalist states abroad, and with what remains of the counter-revolution at home. It must then also master the most difficult problems connected with the organisation of production and distribution. What is to be the economic plan? How is one to utilise the services of the brain workers? How are the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie to be educated in Communism? How are experienced managers to be developed from among the workers? How are the broad and as yet unconscious sections of our own class to be won over? And there are many other similar questions.

All require for their correct solution a *knowledge* of society and its classes, of all their peculiarities and their attitude in this or that case. There is required, too, a knowledge concerning the economy of society, and the social thought of the different groups in society. In short, a *social science* is indispensable. The practical problem of the transformation of society can only be rightly solved when the working class has a scientific policy; that is to say, a policy based on scientific theory. The proletariat possesses this scientific theory in the form of Marxism.

*The Bourgeoisie and the Social Sciences.*—The bourgeoisie, too, creates its social sciences in response to its practical needs. In so far as it is the *ruling* class, it must master a great number of questions: How the capitalist order of things is to be maintained; how the so-called "Normal Evolution" of capitalist society, that is to say, the regular production of profits can be ensured; how to organise the economic institutions for this purpose; what policy is to be pursued in relation to other countries; how to keep the upper hand over the working class; how to avoid disputes in one's own ranks; how to fit a staff of officials, parsons, police and teachers; how to conduct education in such a way that the working class will not become so brutalised as to be capable of damaging the machinery, but at the same time unenlightened enough to remain complacent under its oppressors, etc., etc.?

The bourgeoisie, for these reasons, requires social science. It needs it in order to help it to find its way aright in the complicated life of society and in the solution of the practical problems of life. It is an interesting fact, for example, that the first bourgeois economists were practical men who came from the ranks of the big commercialists, or men who were occupied in the service of the State. The great theoretical exponent of the bourgeoisie, Ricardo, was an experienced banker.

*The Class Character of the Social Sciences.*—Bourgeois professors always maintain that they are the representatives of so-called "Pure

Science"; that all earthly prejudices, the struggle of interests, the material needs of life, the desire for profits, and other earthly and sordid things are absolutely remote from the consideration of their science. They speak and write as if a professor were a god enthroned upon a high mountain, dispassionately observing public life in all its diversity. They believe (and they have much to say about this) that sordid practice has not the slightest influence upon "pure" theory. But from what has already been said, we see that this is not the case. On the contrary, Science itself is born in practice. And if that is so, then it is perfectly clear that the social sciences have a *class* character. Every class has its practice, its particular problems, its interests, and therefore *its conception* of things. The bourgeoisie is concerned, in the first place, in maintaining the rule of capital, in perpetuating it, consolidating it, and extending it. The working class is concerned, above all, with destroying the capitalist order and establishing the rule of the working class in order to reconstruct the whole world. It is easy to understand that bourgeois practice demands one thing and proletarian practice something quite different; that the bourgeoisie has *its* conception of things and the working class quite another conception; that the social science of the bourgeoisie differs entirely from that of the proletariat.

*Why Does Proletarian Science Stand Higher than Bourgeois Science?*—The following question now presents itself to us: If the social sciences have a class character, why does proletarian science stand higher than bourgeois science? The working class has its interests, its aims, and practice. The one class, as the other, is in like measure interested in things. The matter is in no way altered by the fact that the one class is a well-disposed and generous class, concerned about the welfare of mankind, while the other class is selfish and profiteering. The one has its red spectacles, the other white spectacles. But why are red spectacles better than white? Why does the one see better through the red than the other sees through the white?

Let us consider the position of the bourgeoisie. We have seen that they are interested in retaining the capitalist order. At the same time it is admitted that there is "nothing eternal under the sun." There were at one time slave-holders; then there were lords of the manor; there was and there is a capitalist order. There were also other forms of human society. If that is so, and it unquestionably is, then it follows that to understand the life of society one must above all understand that all is variable, that one form of society is dissolved through the other.

Let us take the example of a landowner in the Feudal Age who

lived before the emancipation of the peasants. He could never conceive of the existence of a social order where man required to sell or exchange. Could such a lord of the manor have been able to understand correctly the evolution of society? Naturally not! Why? Because he wore blinkers and not spectacles. He could see no farther than his nose, and, therefore, could never understand what lay in front of his nose.

It is just those kind of blinkers that the bourgeoisie also wears. It is interested in the retention of capitalism and believes that capitalism is durable and eternal. Therefore, it is not in a position to perceive and observe those features in the evolution of capitalist society which point to its transitory existence, to its inevitable decay, (or even to its possible decay), to its transformation into another order of life. This is best seen in the example of the World War and the Revolution. How many more or less distinguished bourgeois professors have foreseen the consequences of the world carnage? Not one! They were all occupied with supporting their bourgeois governments, with predicting the victory of the capitalists in their own country. Nevertheless, it is such phenomena as the universal impoverishment resulting from the War and the Revolution of the proletariat, that decide the destiny of mankind and alter the whole shape of the world. And the bourgeoisie has seen nothing. But the Communists, the representatives of proletarian science, have foreseen all this. Why? Because the proletariat is not interested in maintaining the old order and on that account is *more far-seeing*.

It is now not difficult to perceive why proletarian social science stands higher than that of the bourgeois. It is superior to the latter, because it investigates the phenomena of social life in greater depth and breadth; because it is in a position to see farther, and to perceive clearly what escapes the gaze of bourgeois social science. Therefore, it is also intelligible that we Marxists have the full right to regard proletarian science as the true science and to demand general recognition for it.

*The Different Social Sciences and Sociology.*—Human society is a very complicated thing; all social phenomena are very complex and manifold. There are economic phenomena, the economic structure of society, its political organisation as well as the provinces of morality, religion, art, science, family relations, etc. All those phenomena are frequently intermixed in very curious combinations, and constitute the stream of social life. It goes without saying that one must approach the knowledge of this complicated social life from different sides, and sub-divide science into a series of sciences. One science investigates the economic life of society (economics), or especially the general laws of capitalist economy

(political economy). Another investigates law and the state, an investigation which again falls into special branches. A third investigates ethics, etc.

In each of these provinces the sciences in turn fall into two classes. One investigates what was at such and such a time and in this and that place ; such are the historical sciences. For example, in the province of law one can trace with precision and describe in detail how laws of the State have arisen and how their forms have changed. That would be the *history of law*. But one can investigate *general questions* and solve them. What is law ? Under what conditions does it arise ? Under what conditions does it disappear ? On what depends its forms, etc. That is the *theory of law*. Such sciences are called theoretical.

Among the social sciences there are two important sciences which consider not a single domain of social life, but the whole life of society in all its complexity. In other words, they are concerned not with any one series of phenomena (either of an economic, or of a legal, or of a religious character, etc.), but investigate the collective life of society as a whole, and consider all social phenomena. Such sciences are *history* on the one side, and, on the other, *sociology*. After what we have already said it is easy to recognise the difference between them. *History* traces and describes how the stream of social life runs at this or that time and in this or that place (how, for example, economy, law, morality, science and a whole series of other things have developed in Russia from the year 1700 to the year 1800, or in China from the year 2000 B.C. to the year 1000 A.D., or in Germany after the Franco-German War in 1871, or in any other period of time, in any other land or series of lands). *Sociology* on the other hand raises general questions : What is society ? On what depends its continued development or its decline ? In what reciprocal relations stand the different social phenomena (economics, law, science, etc.) ? In what way is their development to be explained ? What are the historical forms of society ? How are their changes explained, etc., etc. ? Sociology is the most general (the most abstract) among the social sciences. It is often designated by other names such as "Philosophy of History," "Theory of Historical Processes," etc.

It is now evident in what relation history and sociology stand to one another. Since sociology finds out the general laws of human evolution, it serves as the *method* for history. When, for example, sociology establishes the general proposition that the forms of the state depend upon the forms of economy, the historian in every chosen epoch must seek and find this connection, and he has to show, in given cases, how this connection finds its concrete expression. History supplies the material for sociological conclusions

and generalisations, since these conclusions are not invented but drawn from actual historical facts. Sociology on its side exhibits a definite standpoint, a mode of investigation, or, as some say, the method of history.

*The Theory of Historical Materialism as Marxist Sociology.*—The working class has its own proletarian sociology, which is known under the name of Historical Materialism. It is a theory which in its essentials was formulated by Marx and Engels. It is called by others the “materialist conception of history” or simply “economic materialism.” This most valuable theory represents the sharpest instrument of human knowledge. With its help the proletariat finds its way aright in the most complicated questions of social life and of the class struggle. With its help also the Communists predicted the War as well as the Revolution, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and the attitude of the different parties, groups, and classes in the great transformation which mankind has experienced. Our book is devoted to the exposition and development of this theory.

FOOTNOTE.—Many comrades believe that the theory of Historical Materialism can in no way be considered as Marxian Sociology and that it is not systematically set forth as such. They believe that it is merely a living method of historical knowledge and that its truths are merely demonstrable in so far as we speak of concrete and historical events. In addition to this, it is argued that the concept of sociology is itself a very indefinite one; that some understand by sociology the science of primitive culture, the origin of the earliest forms of human communities, for example, the family; for others sociology consists in the vaguest considerations of the most different types of social phenomena; while for others it consists in an uncritical comparison of society with an organism (the organic biological School of Sociology), etc. These arguments are false. In the first place one must not create, out of the confusion which prevails in the bourgeois camp, a new confusion. What place does the theory of historical materialism occupy? It is not political economy. It is not history. *It is the general theory of society, and of the laws of its development*, that is to say, sociology. Secondly, the fact that it is a theory of historical materialism, a method of history, by no means takes away its significance as a sociological theory. Very often some abstract science supplies to the less abstract, the point of view (that is to say, the method). That is true also in this case as we have seen from the general text.

N. BUHARIN.

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## WANTED: The MARXISM of MARX!

*We are in entire agreement with the writer of this article in his plea for a re-discussion of the fundamental principles of our teaching—which does not of course mean that we agree entirely with everything he says. Next month we hope to publish some replies from Plebs and N.C.L.C workers.*

**T**HE storm raging throughout the revolutionary movement of this country on the question of Marxist education has reached a stage when it seems advisable to call attention to the fact that what we are witnessing is not simply a clash of personalities. It is symptomatic of the condition of the whole revolutionary movement here, indicating a profound process of adjustment and orientation arising from new experiences and new demands.

We have entered the revolutionary epoch. Vast movements have within the last five years shaken the old order to its foundations, torn great gaps in its superstructure and upset the calculations of the theoreticians of old schools and new. Although the revolutionary movement of this country, B.S.P., S.L.P., Shop Stewards, Plebs League and other organisations declared at once their solidarity with the Russian Revolution and hailed it as the beginning of the world revolution, no one can say that the programme and policy of any one of these organisations were equal to the implications of the revolution. Their response to the revolution was the instinctive response of revolutionists to its elemental force rather than the confirmation and fulfilment of a policy they had been consciously pursuing.

From that time onward the movement has been struggling to catch up with history. The volition of the revolution was tremendous. We heard all kinds of cries. "To hell with education!" "Don't worry about organisation." "Action is the thing." "The movement will produce the man, the organisation, and the clarity of vision." These were great days, full of the zest of life and the underlying impulse behind the impulse to bang the class-room doors was sound. When the same surging movement comes again, then again the place of every revolutionist worth his salt will be in the front of the actual battle. There is a time for training as well as for fighting, even though we learn by fighting. This we are discovering through experience. The development of the world revolution proved to be a much greater thing than we had dreamed,

The power and capacity for resistance of the capitalist state proved to be something which could not be overcome without long preparation.

It has become increasingly clear that whilst the direction of forces is one thing, and is clearly discernible, the *tempo* of the movement of these forces is another. Waves of revolutionary fervour sweep the masses forward, they recede, they come again, until the cumulative power generated by successive experiences carries the workers to their final triumph.

All these things are now written across the pages of contemporary history. We have rushed forward, retreated, and now again appear to be at the beginning of a new upward sweep of revolutionary fervour. But we have not yet assimilated these recent experiences and translated their lessons into all departments of our revolutionary activity, though life is hammering hard at us to make haste.

The theoretical equipment of the English-speaking countries has never been much to boast about. Its revolutionary literature is very meagre. The extent to which events themselves have shattered the main tenets which we held prior to the Russian revolution indicates the vastness of the change which the movement is undergoing. "The most advanced countries in capitalism will be the first to make the revolution." This was the basis upon which the most revolutionary sections built their theories, and they looked to America to lead the way. And the route—the ballot box plus industrial might. Those who were not parliamentarians in the reformist sense stressed industrial organisation and leaned towards the theory of the growth of workers' industrial organisations to such dimensions that they would emerge out of capitalism much as the butterfly emerges from the chrysalis. The educational curriculum consisted of a knowledge of evolution, primitive society, Marxian economics, industrial history, and the modern working-class movement.

How vast has been the shattering of our old equipment a little reflection will make clear. Russia made the proletarian revolution first. The manner and form of the revolution are totally different to all our previous conceptions. The revolution spreads west and east, new international organisations are thrown up, peoples held down for generations by imperial powers respond to the reverberations of the revolution. The actualities of the revolutionary epoch make us laugh at what we once thought were revolutionary theories. And yet we called our theories Marxism, and the leaders of the revolution declare and prove Marxian theory true to the actualities of revolution.

It would be interesting to trace the contradictions to their origin step by step, but sufficient for the moment if we can diagnose what's

wrong. Marxian teaching has suffered many interpretations at different periods, and the fundamental difference in the nature of these periods will give the key to the situation. The *Communist Manifesto* of 1847 and the foundations of Marxism were laid in the midst of a revolutionary period. It was followed by a long period of imperialist expansion and capitalist development wherein the working class of Europe became adapted to imperialism and reaped the advantages from the exploitation of subject peoples. During this period the working-class movement and its organisations grew in size and power and apparently gave substance to the idea of the new society growing within the womb of the old ; destined to emerge by moving onward from precedent to precedent. It was in this latter period that all our theoretical armoury was forged and our revolutionary organisations had their birth. We were in a wonderful period of mechanical development and our theories were mechanical theories. The mechanics of capitalism obscured the dynamics of the class struggle. We talked of the class struggle, but thought of it mechanically, counting heads by ballot papers, weaving forms of organisation, explaining the commodity theory, explaining the economic interest of imperialists, talking of the materialist conception of history, always dealing with abstractions ; never the actual class struggle and how to wage it.

The whole movement was permeated with these theories. The revolutionist addressing the unemployed would give a long historical dissertation on crises and the impossibility of solving the unemployed problem under capitalism. Addressing the strikers, he would deliver a chunk of De Leon's *What Means This Strike ?* and tell them that until they had industrial unionism they could not hope to win. The more moderate would advise them to vote Labour and amalgamate their unions into industrial unions. These were the concrete results of the educational and political work of the period.

1917 knocked the bottom out of the "Marxism" of this period. It ushered us into the revolutionary epoch of the twentieth century and threw into relief the Marxism of the revolutionary period crystallised and enriched by the experience and thought of the leaders of the Russian revolution. It is the inrush of ideas and light from the revolution rushing up against the custodians of the past that has created the theoretical and political storms within the ranks of every phase of the revolutionary movement.

The Plebs League and the Labour Colleges cannot hope to escape the storms, and attacks upon types of education should be distinguished from attacks upon the institutions. These organisations have been the custodians of Marxian education. It has been their proud boast that they were such, and they must perforce be

profoundly affected by the changes which life demands. They have been the custodians of the Marxism of the epoch of imperialist expansion, and the defect of this theory and its fundamental errors are clear.

Plebs assert that the fact of the Class Struggle is the fundamental justification for independent working-class education. It is upon this plank that we have fought the W.E.A.

Plebs stand for workers' control of education. But it needs more than workers' control of education to ensure it being other than W.E.A. education in character.

Plebs have declared that education is for a purpose and that purpose the emancipation of the workers.

The Plebs pamphlet, *What is Independent Working Class Education?* concludes as follows :—

We shall test the value of all our studies by the simple question: "Do they help to fit us to play a more useful part in the work immediately in front of us—the liberation of our class from oppression and exploitation?" Only as a means to that end does education concern us.

These premises and these tests are important.

Is it helping the workers to "play a more useful part," to make fighters, and to equip them with an education which leaves them to fall into the same pitfalls as the previous generation?

What "certain fundamental elementary principles" do you propose to get across? Merely the *fact* of the class struggle, and never a single suggestion as to *how* the workers are to wage the struggle? No mention of what are the fundamental and elementary requirements of victory in the struggle? Shall we spend months unravelling the Theory of Value, and never mention the elementary fact that the workers must have a revolutionary workers' party—lest we be accused of party politics?

Shall we spread out the world before the workers on maps, indicate its wonderful resources and the network of capitalist interests which control it; tell them of the evolution of man through the ages; tell them of complex systems of ancient society, and of the intricacies of modern finance, and never a word about the "fundamental elementary" fact that emancipation is impossible without the conquest of power?

Shall we tell them of the evolution of Trades Unionism to Industrial Unionism and never a word about their saturation with Imperialism?

These are the kind of fundamental test questions which are knocking at the doors of every college and every class claiming to teach Marxism.

The revolution has blown to smithereens the pedantic formalism of the so-called Marxian theorists of the epoch of the Second

International. We are now faced with the challenge to give the revolution full play within the institutions of the working class and bring the Marxism of Marx to bear upon its problems, which means that the class struggle is the key to the interpretation of the educational needs of the workers. Without it there is no justification for independent working-class education, no justification for the existence of the Plebs and the Labour Colleges, and no fulfilment of the published aims and tests of these organisations.

[Real Marxist education shows *why* there is a class struggle, *the character* of the class struggle, *how to wage* the class struggle, and *how to end* the class struggle. These are the fundamental elementary things we *must* "get across."

J. T. MURPHY.

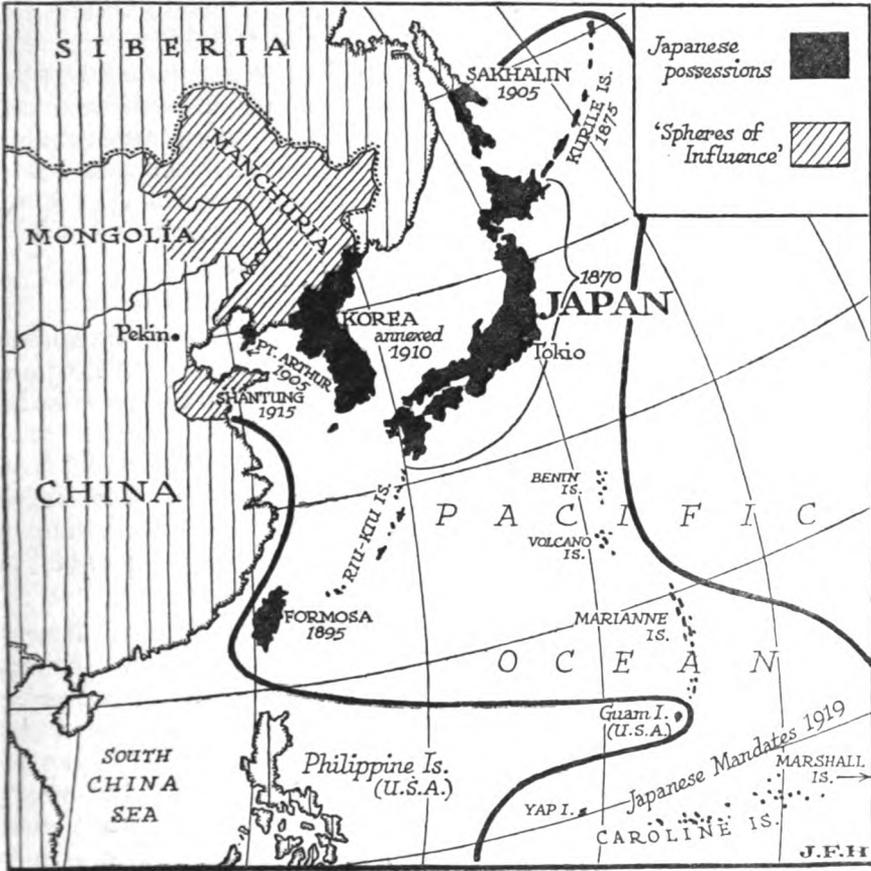
## The EXPANSION of JAPAN

**C**ENTURIES of development are nowadays crammed into decades ; decades into single years. Japan is the most remarkable example of this accelerated movement. Until little more than half a century ago Japan slumbered under her Shogun rulers, knowing little and caring less about the outside world.

That first chapter was ended by the American squadron of Commodore Perry in 1853. Japan was forced to make trade treaties and open her ports to Great Britain and Russia also. Her seclusion was ended once and for all. But she did not become mere clay to the Western potters. She adopted their ways, and internal development on capitalist lines was carried through in rapid fashion. The political machinery was altered by the "Restoration" (1868—9), in which four ruling families leapt to power, using the Mikado, with his powers greatly increased, as their stalking horse. The feudal lords became financial barons, receiving, in compensation for their previous rights, State Loan Bonds and railway shares. The Children of the Rising Sun soon absorbed all that the white would-be conqueror could teach them. That is the second chapter in Japanese history.

Japan was poorly equipped to meet her rivals. She is relatively poor in coal and iron ; the hydro-electric plants now being introduced and the use of her native iron sand do not fill the gap. Her insufficiency in this respect explains the bewildering jump into the third phase—Imperialist Japan. The war against China (1894—5) for dominance in Korea, and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902), which enabled her to conquer the Russians in Manchuria (1904—7)—these are events which mark her full-blooded Imperial greatness.

An aggravating factor—it is no more than this—has been the pressure of population. “The sign *Standing room only* hangs outside Nippon.” But Imperialism is not caused by an over-spill of population. If that were so, the Imperialism of France, with its declining birth rate, would be hard to explain. And in Japan, while Imperialism continues unabated, her population rate of increase declines. (*Statesman’s Year Book*, 1922.)



The population question is a side issue. Let us endeavour to notice the chief features of modern Japan, whose speed of development gathers momentum with every year. The World War gave to Japan her greatest opportunity. Like America, she became a creditor nation. Her exports exceeded her imports during that great conflict to such an extent that her stock of gold increased sixfold to £200,000,000 in 1920, and despite the post-war slump, which had disastrous effects in Japan, the £ is still below par in relation to the yen.

The wartime boom is shown in the following figures of the total capital of companies :—

					£
1905	..	..	..	..	97,000,000
1914	..	..	..	..	206,000,000
1918	..	..	..	..	414,000,000

In 1921 nearly £224 millions and in 1922 £150 millions of new capital were raised and capitalisation shows the greatest and maintained increases in Korea, Manchuria and Karafuto.

Export trade more than trebled itself during the period 1913—1919, and the new markets were gained chiefly in Australia and India. The figures for the total foreign trade bring further illustration of Japan's meteoric career during the last ten years :—

(Yen in millions).

1912	..	..	..	..	526.9
1920	..	..	..	..	4,284.5
1922	..	..	..	..	3,527.75

Growth of railways is a good indication of capitalist expansion. The total mileage in Japan in 1872—long after the map of England had been made to look like a gridiron—was only eighteen miles. By 1880 it had only advanced to seventy-three. But twenty years later it had soared to 3,638, and in 1920 the mileage stood at 8,207. (A significant item in her 1922 imports was thirty-four locomotives from the General Electric Company, England.) Electrification of the home railways is proposed, and five lines are planned in Mongolia and Manchuria.

Shipping is as essential to Japan as it is to Great Britain. Americans use the subsidies (£14,400,000 up to 1916) given by the Japanese Government under the 1896 and 1910 Laws as an object lesson for the U.S. Government in the present dispute, in which the Senate has refused to pass the Shipping Subsidy Bill. Japan's mercantile marine now ranks third in world shipping, but nearly one-half of her 3,325,000 gross tonnage has been built since 1918, which means up-to-date ships, and makes her a more formidable competitor. Her warship tonnage amounts to 700,000, and Navalism and Militarism combined swallow up one-half of the national revenue.

Japan has been an apt pupil in every way. The Navalism of England and the Militarism of pre-war Germany have been faithfully copied. The O.S.K. (Osaka Shosen Kaisha) imitates the British shipping trusts. "The Industrial Bank of Japan is like the great Deutsche Bank in that it is the creator and partner of various industrial undertakings. It will only finance Japanese enterprises." So well is finance capital to the fore in Japan that

every big bank is part of the Government service, and there are special banks for foreign trade and for each colony.

The secret treaties with Czarist Russia, and the hidden attempts to negotiate a separate peace with Germany (1916—17) reveal that her diplomats have little to learn in the "double-cross" dealings of modern Powers. Indeed, they seem to have outpointed even the representatives of Great Britain. For after annexing the German outposts in China, she threw at the latter's head in 1915 the notorious Twenty-one Demands (summarised in *Outline of Imperialism*, pp. 105—6). These revealed in startling fashion the ambitions of Japan to turn China into a mere Japanese colony, for, under these demands, Chinese coal and iron, her army, finance and railway administration would have been placed entirely under Japanese control. Bertrand Russell points out the Demands implied a special attack upon the British position in the Yangtze Valley. Yet, despite this, Britain secretly agreed to support the Japanese claim to Shantung at the "Peace" conference. Liberal America balked these ambitions and made the Versailles Treaty (1919) a dead letter in respect to Shantung. But Japan tenaciously held on to Vladivostok until September, 1922, and the Russians will only secure the evacuation of Northern Sakhalin by American help. (See Geographical Footnote, PLEBS, March, 1923.)

The swiftness and duplicity of the Japanese diplomats is possible because they have to make no sacrifices to preserve the *form* of democratic government, as have their Western rivals. In 1922 only 5 per cent. of the total population had a right to vote despite a vigorous agitation for manhood suffrage. The Diet has not even nominal control over the Army and the Navy. The Mikado is worshipped as temporal and spiritual lord combined who is even above discussion. He and his Genro, the five Elder Statesmen, have the power over the Budget—a power which even the Kaiser lacked.

Radek makes a good parallel (*Winding Up of Versailles Treaty*, p. 39) between England in 1842 and present-day Japan. The workers are in a desperate plight and form, as did our Chartist, somewhat mixed revolutionary organisations. The liberal commercial-industrial middle class is arrayed against the landlords and the junkers' control over administration. But this middle class cannot overcome both the landlords and the rebellions of the workers, as it did in England, because the lords of land are supported by the lords of finance. Meanwhile the battle line alters from day to day. The Twenty-one Demands and the retention of Sakhalin are indications of the ascendancy of the feudal-financial clique. Franchise reforms, negotiations with Soviet Russia, a

more liberal treatment of China, mean that the oligarchy of land and finance have retreated a little.

The grand era of Japanese expansion has meant for the Japanese workers what the British era meant for our forefathers. All the worst excesses of exploitation attending the British Industrial Revolution have been repeated. Japanese operatives work very long hours for the princely sum of 2s. 6d. a day for females and 3s. 7½d. for males. Yet Japanese manufacturers are setting up mills in China, where labour power is really cheap! Night work for thousands of women is still maintained despite the promises made at the Washington Labour Conference. *Verda Utopio* (Osaka, September, 1922) tells how girls are sold to the textile manufacturers by their parents for "apprenticeship" periods of three to five years, and sometimes even for seven to ten years; they "live in" and work under the most abominable conditions. Straw plaiting and basket work are done by juvenile labour (seven to sixteen years of age) in sweating dens for yearly wages of £2 to £4, with a working day of eighteen to nineteen hours. No wonder straw plaiting is no longer done at Luton but imported from Nippon! It is true Factory Acts have been instituted, but they do not apply to home industries or to factories with less than fourteen hands.

Organisation among the workers has scarcely begun. Only 4.5 to 5 per cent. of the two million male industrial workers were organised at the end of 1919. Katayama in his report to the fourth Congress of the Third International, gives trade union membership for 1921 as little more than a quarter of a million out of a total of about eleven million workers. Nosaka (*Labour Monthly*, August—September, 1921) told how ruthlessly labour organisations had been suppressed and socialist leaders imprisoned and hung. Yet, as in our own annals, strikes take place, and increase year by year. There are hopeful elements in the Prussia of the East. From the strange source of the *Daily Mail Year Book* (1923) we learn of "the growth of class consciousness" in Japan last year.

No treatment of Japanese expansion would be complete without reference to the greatest obstacle it will find, an obstacle which yet may smash it:—American expansion. It is America which has effectively stopped Japan's appropriation of China and Siberia. The Monroe Doctrine "will be re-read in stentorian tone at Tokio" because of Japanese penetration in South America. If China persists in her demand for the return of Port Arthur, whose lease to Japan expires in the present month (March), she will secure the whole-hearted support of the U.S.A. The world must be made fit for "dollarocracy."

America does not suffer from the shortage of vital raw materials which explains Japan's encroachments upon China. Economically

strong, the U.S.A. will stand for the Open Door policy. Trade rivalries will hasten military rivalries. Already the military experts are recognising that Washington did not find a pacific solution for the Pacific Problem and are coolly discussing what chance the U.S. would have in an attack upon Japan. The Washington Conference gave America superiority but not enough, and although America has the Phillipines and Guam these have not the fortifications, harbours, oil-fuel depots, repairing works, etc., which would be vitally necessary for an attack upon Japan. They are also surrounded by Japanese islands which already have been prepared in view of possible attack or blockade. The Panama Canal, on the other hand, is made just as impregnable from Japanese attack by the 5,000 miles of the Pacific and the lack of neighbouring naval bases. Neither can hit the other safely without the help of an Ally. But the necessity of obtaining raw materials, food and markets which urges Japan into China are strengthened by the fear of the military consequences of a Pro-American China, which would make a blockade quickly fatal for Japan.

In a conflict between Japan and America the position of Great Britain is by no means certain. America has very strong cards she can play : (1) Her creditor position to Great Britain ; (2) The backing she can give to France in setting up an Anti-British hegemony in Europe or to Turkey to spoil the hopes of the Royal Dutch Shell in the Middle East ; (3) Her recognised economic world superiority. Again Canada and Australia would scarcely fight for Japan against America. The fear of the masses will act as a deterrent to open rupture and war in all three countries. But the oppositions between them are too great to be covered for long. Russian support will be angled for by both America and Japan. Probably Britain will stand by in the great coming conflict and endeavour to re-establish her lost world supremacy.

Outside of a World Trust, Imperialist expansion can have no other result than wars. That, or the international triumph of the workers !

MARK STARR.

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# GEOGRAPHICAL FOOTNOTES to CURRENT HISTORY

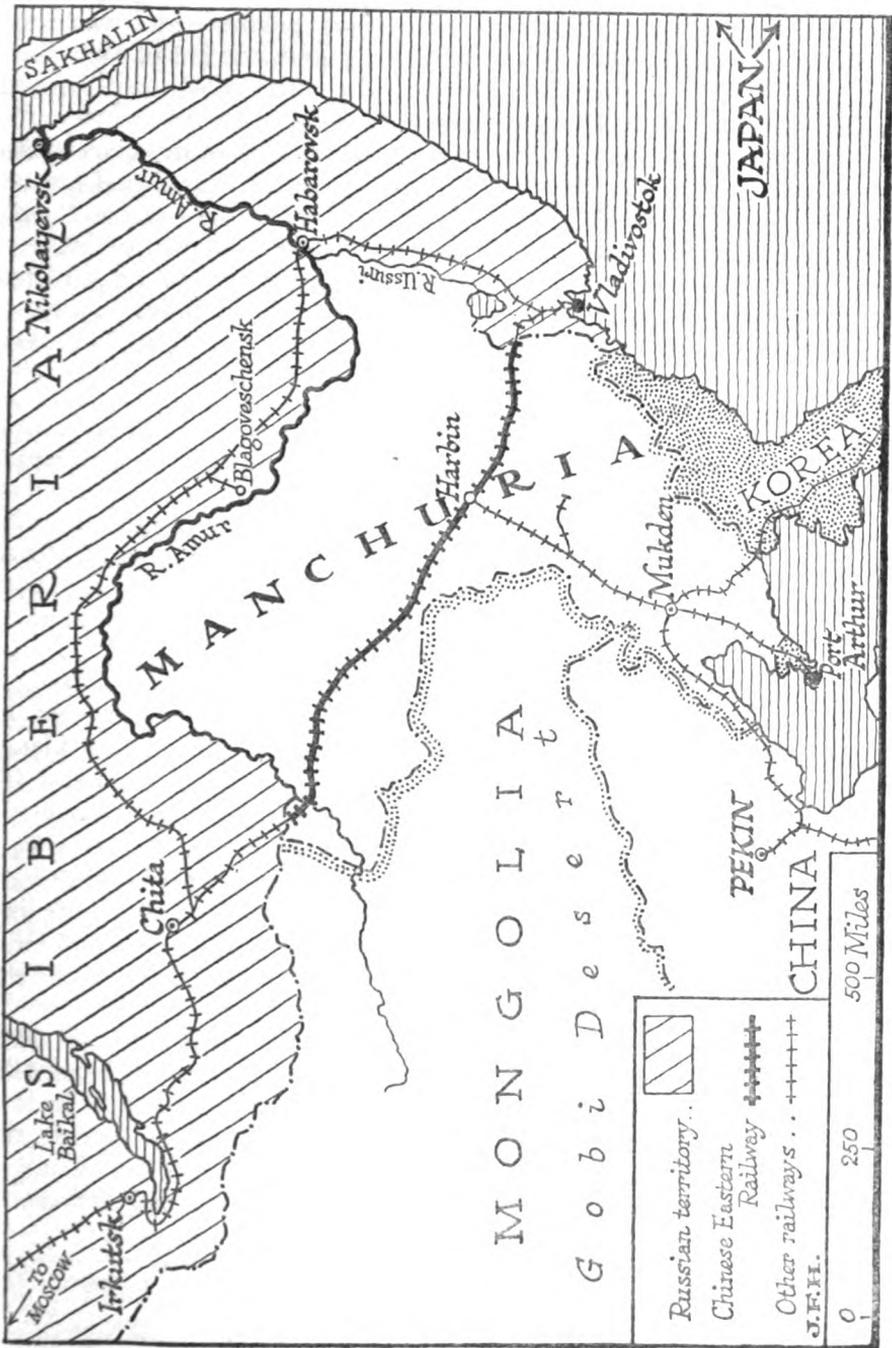
## MANCHURIA AND THE CHINESE EASTERN RAILWAY

*Certain land routes, like certain waterways, possess peculiar economic and political significance in the world of to-day. That significance depends in part on natural geographical facts; in part on the location of political frontiers. The Chinese Eastern Railway affords an interesting instance of a "key" land route which, though not quite of the same international importance as such waterways as Panama, the Straits, or Suez, yet constitutes a "problem" fraught with possibilities for peace or war.*

**I**T was soon after the middle of the nineteenth century, when the Russian Empire had already succeeded in extending itself across the whole width of Northern Asia, that a railway from Moscow to the Pacific Coast was first suggested. Not until 1891, however, was the Trans-Siberian Railway actually begun; and it was only completed fourteen years later, in 1905, during the Russo-Japanese War. Many things happened in the Far East during those fourteen years.

In 1894—5 the Chino-Japanese War was fought; and the peace treaty which ended it gave Russia the opportunity she had long been watching for—of shortening the route originally planned for the eastern section of the Trans-Siberian, and at the same time establishing herself in the economically important province of Manchuria. The treaty ceded part of Southern Manchuria to Japan; and Russia, posing of course as a quite disinterested friend of China, intervened to compel Japan to relinquish this claim. In return for this the Russian Government obtained from Li-Hung-Chang the right to carry the Trans-Siberian line across Northern Manchuria to Vladivostok (see map), thus reducing the distance to that port by several hundred miles, and very considerably lessening both the time and cost of the line's construction. This railway, to be called the Chinese Eastern Railway, was to be built by the Russo-Chinese Bank (headquarters, St. Petersburg; large proportion of capital provided by a French syndicate). In its inception, therefore, the line was a Russian weapon against Japan; twenty years later the position was reversed.

The Chinese Eastern was completed in 1903; and not only the route to Vladivostok, but a line branching south to Port Arthur, was open. For in the meantime Russia had turned her "friendship" with China to further good account by securing a



lease of that (ice-free) port and the peninsular on which it stands—the very area of Southern Manchuria out of which she had successfully kept the Japanese two or three years before. She was thus dominant throughout the whole province; and, the Boxer Rebellion having afforded a plausible excuse, she had substituted armed occupation for “peaceful penetration.”

A glance at the map is enough to show that, quite apart from the economic value of Manchuria itself, its control was a vital matter to the Russians. In enemy hands it could easily be used to “out-flank” and cut off Vladivostok and the Coast Province of Siberia. And the railway across it would enable an attack to be directed at the very heart of Eastern Siberia, hundreds of miles inland.

The map makes clear also the reasons for Japanese anxieties. Manchuria in Russian hands would threaten Japan’s occupation of Korea—her foothold on the mainland. Russia dominant in Manchuria would mean, very soon, Russia dominant in all Northern China—the area whose exploitation the Japanese industrialists had realised was vital to their own future power.

The Russo-Japanese War followed. It lasted nearly two years (1904—5), and was fought almost entirely on Chinese territory. The peace treaty transferred Port Arthur and the southern railroad to Japan,\* and gave Japan equal rights with Russia in Northern Manchuria. Petersburg’s vision of Far Eastern Empire had faded.

Nevertheless, the government of the Czar set to work to “consolidate” what was left to it. Port Arthur was gone, but Vladivostok remained. But the short cut to Vladivostok, the Chinese Eastern Railway, was now no longer an entirely safe route. At once the construction of the longer All-Russian route along the Amur river was begun. And though Petersburg and Tokio soon came to the conclusion that, so far as the economic exploitation of Manchuria was concerned, it was better to forget the past and work harmoniously together, the building of the Amur line was proceeded with. It was completed in 1916—two years after the outbreak of the Great War.

A year later came the Russian Revolution. The story of what has since happened in Manchuria and Siberia has just been told by Mr. H. K. Norton in a book of absorbing interest.† It is a story of the armed struggle of workers and peasants against the forces of Imperialist robber-powers. And all through that struggle the control of the railway across Manchuria was the strongest weapon in the hands of the robbers.

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\* For the remainder of the twenty-five years’ lease granted to Russia. The lease will expire (March 27th) before these lines are in print.

† *The Far Eastern Republic of Siberia.* By H. K. Norton. (Allen and Unwin, 12s. 6d.)

Through Vladivostok and along that railway there had poured into Russia, during the early years of the war, supplies and munitions from America and Japan. By the same route, after the March Revolution, exiled revolutionists returned to Russia. Then came the Bolshevik Revolution (October, 1917)—and the Japanese Imperialists were quick to seize their opportunity. On December 30th a Japanese warship appeared in Vladivostok harbour.

The Japanese consul at once sent a note... attempting to explain this unprecedented breach of international custom. He professed friendship for the Russians, and hoped for "moral development," and that no necessity would arise for interference... The warship had been sent to protect the Japanese residents.

At the same time Russian reactionaries were establishing themselves at various points inland. General Horvath, who had been Governor of the Railway Zone, set up a "government" at Harbin—*i.e.*, on Chinese territory, but without Chinese permission—calling himself Dictator of the Russian Far East. Semenov, a choice blackguard with a Cossack following, based himself on the railway between Manchuria and Chita; he was a twentieth century highwayman, and made a living by "holding up trains and forcing payments, no matter what the nature of the load, nor for whose benefit it was being shipped."

Still further inland were the Czecho-Slovaks, an army of 50,000 men, who had, at their own request, been disarmed and entrained for Vladivostok *en route* for Europe; but who had faced about on the journey and, *fully armed*, marched west again to fight the Bolsheviks. Their equipment and munitions had reached them *via* the Chinese Eastern Railway; and by the summer of 1918 they were in control of the whole length of the Trans-Siberian from Lake Baikal westwards to within the frontiers of European Russia.

Having armed the Czecho-Slovaks and marched them back into Russia to help in crushing the Revolution, the Allies now discovered a fresh excuse for intervention in Siberia in the need to "rescue" them. Japan was, of course, only too ready to begin. But there is none too much honour amongst Imperialist thieves, and it was deemed wiser by her allies that she should not intervene alone. Britain and France had their hands more than full in Europe; so the Christian-Commercial government of President Wilson discovered that its heart bled for the Siberians, and almost in the same words as the Japanese consul at Vladivostok, announced its intention of sending troops—and Y.M.C.A. workers—to help stem the tide of Bolshevism and other "disorders." Japan and the U.S. were each to send 7,000 troops. Japan sent "at least 73,000," says Mr. Norton (who all through his book aims at making

Japan the villain of the piece, and America the good—if somewhat muddle-headed—fairy).

Every yard of the railway between Vladivostok and a point only 300 miles from Moscow was now in the hands of the Allies.

The Americans held the Vladivostok lines; Horvath and the Japanese the Chinese Eastern; the Amur was in the hands of the Japanese; Semenov with Japanese support, was in control from the Manchuria frontier to Chita; and the Czechs held the line from there to the other side of the Urals.

Theoretically, the Chinese Eastern was under the control of the U.S. who had been given power of attorney by Britain, France, Italy and China "to take over and run the road *for the benefit of Russia* (!) until a new Russian government was established and recognised by the Allies." But meantime the Government they refused to recognise maintained its power—and "the benefit of Russia" was best worked for by making a few purely formal protests and letting the Japanese and Semenov do the bulk of the dirty work.

In November, 1918, a week after the Armistice ended the war in Europe, Kolchak had been made dictator in Western Siberia; and munitions, uniforms, and supplies of all kinds were sent along for his army *via* the Chinese Eastern and Siberian railways. Throughout 1919 the position in Siberia remained as described above. But by the end of the year Kolchak's power was waning, and the diverse interests of the robber-powers were resulting in quarrels amongst themselves. Finally the U.S. decided to withdraw her troops, and to concentrate instead on her great "Open Door" gospel campaign.

The Japanese remained. Kolchak having fallen, they backed Semenov. The workers and peasants of Eastern Siberia established the Far Eastern Republic. Semenov and his Japanese paymasters did all they could to sabotage it—once again, by their control of the vital railways. From across the Manchurian frontier Semenov and other adventurers raided Siberian towns; while from Mongolia Baron Ungern—also "fed" by the Chinese Eastern Railway—attacked the Republic's territory. But the Republic triumphed; and Mr. Norton's account of the "men at the helm"—including "Bill" Shatov, ex-I.W.W. organiser, the Minister of Transport, whose job it was to reconstruct the railways after the robbers had been cleared out—makes good reading.

The Japanese have at last evacuated Vladivostok. But they still control Manchuria—and the Chinese Eastern Railway. And especially now that the Far Eastern Republic has become an integral part of the Russian Federal Soviet Republic, the control of the Chinese Eastern is as vital a matter to the new Russia as it was to the old. Moscow has declared that Russia must have a

share in that control—which declaration is cited by the other-worldly Bertrand Russell as clear evidence of “Bolshevik imperialism.” Yet until the problem is finally solved—and it can only be finally solved—by the coming of the World Soviet and the destruction of rival Imperialisms, it is clear that the “opening” of the Chinese Eastern, like the opening of the Straits in Europe, is a matter of vital concern to the Soviet Republic. In Mr. Norton’s words :—

With Siberia dependent upon this road for its very existence, with China aspiring to acquire it... with France anxious for the return of the money she has invested in it, and with Japan determined to rule it or ruin it, the Chinese Eastern Railway promises to continue to be a bone of contention in the Far East for some years to come.

J. F. HORRABIN.

## The WEBBS, the STATE, and the WORKERS

I HEARD an unkind story about Mr. and Mrs. Webb the other day. It was a remark of a certain younger member of the aristocracy with socialist leanings. A Fabian friend had been reproving a young man of socialist leanings for lack of appreciation of the Webbs. The young man replied :— “Well, perhaps you’re right. I certainly did hear the other day that the Webbs have just written a socialist book !”

Yes, Mr. and Mrs. Webb have at last left the cautious ways of detailed research, and have launched their assault on the capitalist system.\* It is a devastating assault, it is brilliantly written, and no socialist can afford to pass it by on the bookshelf unread. But if we were asked as Marxians to put our fingers on what we considered the main flaw in the argument, I wonder what most of us would say ?

The substance of the case presented in the book is this :—The present economic system is run for profit, and wealth is unevenly distributed. The latter fact means starvation at one pole and luxury at the other. The former fact means that the economic system is not governed by what is socially useful (*i.e.*, what promotes the maximum economic welfare), because in many cases what is *profitable* to the individual is not the same as what is *useful* to society as a whole. This is aggravated by the fact of inequality, which means that “effective demand” for Rolls-Royces being large, Rolls-Royces are produced in preference to more bread for the poor, although

\* *The Decay of Capitalist Civilisation*, by SIDNEY and BEATRICE WEBB. (Fabian Society and Allen & Unwin, 4s. 6d. net cloth, 2s. 6d. paper boards.)

the social need for bread is far greater. In addition to this, capitalism as a working machine is beginning to break down. Competition has evolved into monopoly coupled with Imperialism. The "dictatorship of the capitalist class" has produced a psychological revolt against it. Hence, it is necessary to supplant "production for profit" by "production for use" by gradually increasing the extent to which the State (or bodies with powers delegated by the State) interferes in the control and administration of industry.

Now, the first part—the purely economic part—of this assault on capitalism is one which in the abstract even orthodox economists admit. Prof. Pigou in his *Economics of Welfare* makes a large point about "exceptions" to the dictum of the classical economists, that each by following his own interests will promote the interests of all. And in those instances where it can be shown that the profit and price measure is not adequate as a measure of social utility, here the argument proves the desirability of State intervention and possibly socialisation.

This part of the Webbs' case does not go very far. It argues for the partial supersession of private capitalism by State capitalism. It does not give a case for a revolutionary or complete change.

Of more revolutionary implication is the argument based on the fact of (1) monopoly cum Imperialism; (2) the class struggle.

We may summarily describe Imperialism as the effect of the growth of big combines, and aggregations of finance-capital, which have developed during the last forty years, and which have from their size and centralisation immense *political power, i.e.,* control over the State. Consequently they are able to use the State for more directly economic purposes than before, *e.g.,* securing control of raw materials abroad for these combines. The result is that the competition between the big national combines of the various countries takes a new form—a political rivalry between States. This is Imperialism.

Let us be candid. Marxists sometimes degenerate into mere mechanical interpreters of every event solely in terms of economic factors. We chant the slogan, "economic power dominates political power," and then fold our hands until economic power shall have miraculously descended from heaven upon us. Few of us are entirely guiltless in this respect. But to interpret events in this way is to neglect the dominant part which *control of the State* plays in imperialist capitalism. True, it may have been their control of industry and finance (combined with their revolutionary *action*) which originally enabled the bourgeoisie to control the State; but to-day it is probably more their control of the State which enables them to keep their hold on finance and industry, than *vice versa*.

Therefore, the whole crux of the matter, quite transcending

in importance any purely *economic* issue of nationalisation *v.* private enterprise, is the control of the State. What group of persons dominates the State? In other words, Where does political "sovereignty" actually and in fact rest? That is the fundamental question to be asked in approaching such proposals as those of the Webbs. Herein lies the difference between the Fabian school and the Marxian school of thought. The Fabian emphasises the issue of social *v.* private enterprise in industry. The Marxist emphasises the issue of *class in relation to the State*.

We have just said that two of the fundamental problems which face the world to-day—and the Webbs admit their importance—are these two political struggles; the one between national States (Imperialism), the other between classes for possession of political "sovereignty" (the class struggle). It will, therefore, make all the difference in the world to the solution of these problems, whether the State which does the socialising is a Capitalist State or a Workers' State. The Webbs' proposals, in fact, amount merely to control of industry by the capitalist-controlled State—State Capitalism. They may hope thereby to mitigate a little Imperialism and the Class Struggle; even if they are successful in their mitigation, it will not be a solution. Thus we see that the centring of one's attention on industry to the exclusion of the important role played by the State in imperialist capitalism causes one to deem sufficient the socialisation of industry *before the political struggle for power has been fought out* and before the balance of political power (control of the State) has been changed.

To give a concrete illustration: The nationalisation of the coal mining industry under the Sankey Scheme would scarcely change the balance of power in society as between the classes at all. The representatives of the consumers would be representatives of "heavy industry"—of Vickers, John Brown, Cammell Laird, and other such; the representatives of the State would be business experts or civil servants drawn from the capitalist class. We know it makes no profound difference to the actions of a Sir E. Geddes whether he is acting as a State official or as President of the F.B.I. *Plus Sa change, plus c'est la même chose!* In effect, therefore, the nationalisation of the mines might actually strengthen imperialist capitalism. It would replace the somewhat chaotic and wasteful administration of the industry under somewhat stupid and short-sighted petty capitalists by a co-ordinated administration... in the interests of the F.B.I. and the combines of British heavy industry!

Similarly, if the French Government ran the mines in the Ruhr, it would merely run them for the greater glory and power and profit

of the Comité des Forges and French heavy industry. What matters it to Stinnes if the German Government control the railways so long as Stinnes has the whip hand over the German Government? Proposals in abundance have been made by Fabians and others for the nationalisation of mines, railways, land, banks. But if they proposed the nationalisation of Vickers, John Brown, and the rest of British "heavy industry" might they not provoke that very revolution which the Webbs so eloquently urge the ruling class to avoid? But even supposing the existing State took over the control of Vickers—would this make any *serious* difference to the balance of political power, and hence to the essential problems of Imperialism and the Class Struggle? (I do not claim necessarily that there would be *no* difference.) The "bosses" of Vickers, instead of fluctuating profits, might get steady salaries from the State as State administrators; but would not the "whip hand" be still very much the same hand as before? Would not the "herd complex" of the capitalist class dominate things just as before; and in all probability would not an essential element of that "herd complex" be the ideals of Empire, the superiority of bourgeois culture, and all the rest of the capitalist ideology? It would involve merely a merging of the capitalists with the capitalist State so that the two were indistinguishable, but the psychology of the industrial administrators would be *at bottom* the old psychology of a class society and not the new psychology of a classless society. It would be State Capitalism; it would be the Servile State, which Belloc saw over ten years ago as the logical outcome of Fabianism; it would not be Socialism. Those who say that the war proved the triumph of Socialism are talking nonsense, unless by Socialism they mean merely State Capitalism: State Capitalism is the logical apotheosis of Imperialism. The actual form in which industry is administered matters comparatively little; *who has control of the State, and hence of industry, matters a great deal.*

If the criticism, therefore, contains some truth that many of us at times have made Marxism too much "an interpretation of politics in terms of economics," instead of "an interpretation of history in terms of class struggle," what should be the central point of our theoretical teaching so far as it is applied to existing problems? If a suggestion may be ventured, I would propose the following in rough outline:—

1.—The essential problems of to-day are political struggles—the struggles of rival national states and the class struggle for control of the State. "The decay of civilisation" can only be arrested in so far as these problems can be solved by the passing of sovereign

power in society—a sovereign power at present embodied in the centralised State—from the capitalist class to the working class.

2.—This question of where ultimate power resides is the important thing, and not the mere superficial *forms* of industrial administration. However far in response to economic expediency the forms of industrial administration in Russia may be modified to a superficial resemblance to capitalist forms (*e.g.*, scientific management, bonus wage-payments, credit and currency system, etc.), Russia will remain separated by a great gulf from the capitalist world, *so long as supreme power rests with the working-class.*

3.—The duty of a real workers' party must be, therefore, to convert every sectional workers' struggle, whether in the field of industry or of Parliament, into a *political struggle*—a struggle to get power. It must judge every tactic, *e.g.*, nationalisation, not by whether it advances an ideal "principle" of Socialism or is near to Socialism in superficial form, but by whether it will strengthen the power of the working class in its struggle.

4.—To do this a workers' revolutionary party must not be composed of mere pure-milk-of-the-word-theorists, nor must it be a mere *pot-pourri* of all "men of goodwill." It must comprise the active members of the working class, who are alive to this struggle, and are educated to see its true nature and implications. It must be an *organisation*, under efficient central control and *direction*, not a mere aggregation of groups and individuals, as have been Socialist parties in the past. Its power to weld the sectional struggles of the workers into a united struggle for power will be proportional *not to the numbers of that party but to its influence in action*—to the extent to which its members spontaneously take the lead, are respected and followed, in all the phases of working-class activity.

That is where the party which the Marxist envisages differs in objective and in constitution from the party which the Webbs have in mind. Our working-class education is of little use unless it goes on from mere description and analysis of what is, and from weighing up of probabilities (*not* inevitability) in the future, to an *application* of Marxist theory to the how and wherefore of *action*. Let us hope, too, that we may so build up the quality of our education—fearlessly scrapping old formulæ which have become hindrances instead of aids to thought, and resolutely remoulding and re-fashioning anew—that the exponents of our point of view may be as erudite scholars, as clear thinkers, and as brilliant writers as Fabian Socialism has in the Webbs.

MAURICE H. DOBB.

## SELLING below VALUE!

**P**ROBABLY the most difficult and complicated science of any is that of Economics (with apologies to R. P. D. for using the word). One has only to note the list of works and authorities Marx quotes in Vol. I. alone to realise the immense and varied reading required to get a thorough grasp of the subject. It is no light task to read steadily through the works of Marx and the Classical School of Economists; since Marx's day the number of books written has been staggering. The reason being as aptly explained in the introduction of the Plebs Textbook on the subject: "Firstly, Economics is the basic science because it deals with first things—the provision of food, clothing and shelter which has to be made before anything else is possible. In dealing with economic relations, the determining factors behind men's ideas and behind all social institutions are revealed. History is a meaningless jumble until Economics explains the rise and fall of social systems—the root of differing political parties—the dynamic of society." "The root of differing political parties"—ah! there's the rub which explains why a difficult subject has been made unnecessarily obscure and its truths perverted by the products of capitalist educational institutions. On the other hand, there are Marxian pedants who have inflicted violent headaches on unfortunate workers attracted to the subject. As Marx is reported to have said, "Preserve me from the Marxians."

For years the movement has been languishing for a satisfactory textbook for our Economics Classes. For years we have alternated between hope and dejection when it has been rumoured that "So and so," the great authority, was tackling the job; alas! rumour proved to be the usual lying jade. But when it was announced that the job was actually in hand, then anticipation and curiosity became rampant. Could a satisfactory exposition of Marxian Economics be confined within the limits of the standard Plebs Textbook? It had been whispered that a thorough exposition of Marxism would require a series of volumes like the Encyclopædia Britannica. Would the book be so rigid and orthodox as to exhibit the dry bones of Marxism? Further, we could imagine all the "heid yins" carefully polishing their microscopes, ready to detect the faintest signs of "heretical" opinion or error. "Patience is a virtue," 'tis said, and in due course the "great day" of publication is announced, and the book finally received in an atmosphere of mingled anticipation and foreboding. Let us at once take a dive into the deep-end by congratulating all those concerned with

it on an excellent achievement. Of course faults will be found in the method of presentation, in the amount of material left out, and with much that is in. The "hard-baked" ones will sniff with condescension. But, nevertheless, to the ordinary worker student, with no time or inclination to read Vol. I., Capital, let alone the other two; who desires to have a grasp of the fundamentals of the subject; who wants a simple explanation of what puzzles him in his workaday life; to the over-worked tutor, who requires an outline to interest his students—the Textbook is just what was wanted.

The book is conveniently divided into twelve chapters suited for a course of twelve lectures. The first, giving an excellent insight into Modern Production, and then proceeding with Commodities, Wages, Capital, Exchange, Foreign Exchange, Banking, Recent Developments of Capitalist Production, Trusts and Combinations, International Trade and Export of Capital, and concluding with the Culmination of Capitalism.

There is a most interesting Historical Appendix giving an outline of the various Schools of Political Economy and their chief characteristics, including the modern school "above the storm of class conflict, humane, liberal, but unconsciously biassed towards the possessing classes." And in this regard the opinion of Dr. Temple (President of the W.E.A.) recently expressed in Glasgow is rather *apropos*. "There was no doubt that the Universities had become, at any rate in England, almost entirely the property of the shareholding class, and it was certainly true that on the whole their books about economics had been written to answer questions that most naturally occur to the minds of shareholding people." A Glossary, Bibliography, Notes for Tutors and Students, and an Index complete the book on the excellent plan of its predecessors.

In a recent criticism Gerald Gould attempts to prove discrepancies in the Textbook in the exposition of the Marxian Labour Theory of Value. Incidentally, he stated Marx subsequently modified this theory. We should be grateful if Gould can give us authority for this, or point out in any of Marx's works where the theory is modified. The truth is, Gould, not agreeing with the theory, is at pains to try and show Marxian inconsistencies. Possibly he has the statement of a modern historical economist in mind: "It is the less necessary to enter upon a discussion of this view here because the doctrine of value which Marxism, in its rigid and orthodox form, necessarily presupposes, is now abandoned by the younger generation of socialists." Gould's quotation from page 22 is torn from its context and relevant sentences left out, and a careful comparison of the pages mentioned will show that there is nothing inconsistent. Certainly there is no attempt at reconciliation of

the Marxian theory and the "utility" school. Considering the number of times the Marxian theories have been abandoned or demolished, "there must be indeed something vital in them."

A few errors have crept in such as on page 72, dealing with Foreign Exchanges. As a matter of fact, the exchanges were "pegged" at 4.76 dollars. When the "pegs" were taken out in March, 1919, the £1 fell to 3.21½ dollars.

Again, it is not wise to suggest that the pre-war value of the £1 in relation to the dollar will never return. The table of exchanges is a waste of good space. A few examples, and reference to any commercial paper for further illustrations (which will necessarily be up-to-date) would suffice.

☐ In the Glossary two important categories should receive separate explanations, e.g., Price and Value. And no doubt exception could be made to some of the definitions, including Capital. And why not define the Capitalist?

Commodities as we know may sell above or below value. Undoubtedly the latest Plebs Textbook is selling well below value at the price of 2s. 6d. Therefore let us be duly grateful by pushing its sale to break all records.

J. HAMILTON  
(President, N.C.L.C.)

## CLASS ROOM NOTES for Students and Tutors

**C**AN the rot be stopped? Has the point of resistance to the degradation of 1921—22 been reached at last? Many signs say, Yes. The miners are voting for the ending of the National Agreement. The building workers in the big centres are solid against the proposed wage reduction, and in the Eastern Counties took up the premature sectional attack upon the painters. The farm-labourers are revolting in sheer desperation. Which Union will have the honour of stopping the retreat? The busmen of London have shown that wage reduction is not an automatic process if the workers put some guts into their opposition. We suggest to classes the following leads for linking up their work with the present situation:—

- (a) Wage reductions, no way out. Lower wages mean decreased purchasing power and more unemployment.
- (b) Need for amalgamation with control of industry in view.
- (c) Revival and enlargement of work of Trades Councils as local rallying centres.

When we find in the King's Speech that the politicians have taken the hint given in the speeches of the Kings of the Big Five concerning the assistance needed by agriculture, we can be sure something is going to happen. Incidentally, we can expect the present Government—a metamorphosed landed class—to give credits, as the American Government has done, to the farmers as naturally as the remnants of the big industrial group—especially the shippers—will oppose such assistance.

It will be well to keep certain facts in mind : Agriculture was protected only until the capitalists won full political power and got from abroad the cheaper corn that meant lower wages. Farming was of secondary importance because of the hold that Britain had upon the foodstuffs of other less developed countries. That is gone or going, and the problem is : How can Britain make herself more self-sufficient ? There are several obstacles in the way :—

(a) *Rent*. This was the great handicap in meeting foreign competition previously and still hangs like a deadweight.

(b) *Undeveloped Agriculture*. England has specialised in manufactured goods and exported her coal and received interest, hence agriculture here has never kept up with the development in other industries. Sir Charles Fielding (late Director General of Food Production) says in his book, *Food* : “ The bulk of our (agricultural) producers are still working industry on a scale and by methods similar to those followed by the hand-worked iron furnaces of sixty years ago, or at about the stage of development reached by the hand loom weavers of that period.”

(c) *Wartime Inflation*. During the war the farmers made enormous profits. Their increase in stock and machinery was estimated by the Enquiry Board at £290,000,000. Their profits, according to Inland Revenue returns, went up from £17,147,000 in 1913 to £102,000,000 in 1919. On the basis of those profits many cultivators became owners and expect a return on the boom price paid for the land. That is partly why they cannot afford to grow wheat and that 830,000 acres are gone out of cultivation in the last three years. In addition capital tied up in the purchase is not available for applying new methods.

So far the only remedy tried has been low starvation wages, but that has not caused a revival. Hence the cry for credits, reduced taxation and tariff protection. Whatever is done by way of loans at a low rate of interest, by better methods of production and marketing a bitter agrarian struggle seems unavoidable. The only thing Labour can do is to revive the Wage Boards and fix a minimum wage and put up all the fight possible against Hodge's further degradation. Attacks must be concentrated on the burden of rent and also upon the inefficient farmers who still insist on retaining

the high standard of life achieved during the war. A levy on land upon 500 acres would be a good step. Credit should not be given to such but to the actual and potential small-holders to help them develop co-operative associations.

Connolly (*Reconquest of Ireland*, Chap. viii.) has much to say upon the union between agricultural and urban labourer and how the town unions and the small farmers' co-operatives could reconquer Ireland. Is the position so different in Great Britain?

There is much rejoicing because President Harding now favours America's entry into the Permanent Court of Justice of the League of Nations. Wilson was dismissed because the industrialists (Rockefeller) of America were suspicious that the financiers and the exporters (Morgan and Vanderlip) were going to revive European competitors at the expense of U.S.A. The U.S.A. isolation has been sufficient to bring home her predominance over debt-laden Britain and the other Powers. The industrial and the financial sections of American capitalism have now arrived at a working agreement. The League of Nations has cleared itself of every suspicion of dangerous idealism. Its treatment of Austria (*Daily Herald*, 28-2-23) has convinced the U.S.A. of its usefulness. For America will increasingly require markets—its production of pig-iron for January, 1923, was double that of January, 1922. A ruined Europe cannot consume even the agricultural products which now clog the market—and by reason of her disposable capital she would naturally become the dominator of the League and scotch any likely South American Latin combination against her. Meanwhile, the Hearst press is running a publicity campaign on the need for American domination in aviation.

Despite being pioneers in many other directions, the organised miners have been backward in their own publication activity. We wish the *Colliery Workers' Magazine*, the new monthly of the S.W.M.F. every success, and hope to see in it some indication that the necessary revival in I.W.C.E. has begun there, in addition to the growing revolt against the present abominable wages.

Our opponents, while they may differ in their explanations of the origin of profits, cannot deny that they exist. The *Economist* puts it on record that 319 industrial companies made net aggregate profits, after the payment of debenture interest, etc., of £24,228,700 in the last quarter of 1922, an increase of 3.9 per cent. on those made in the same period in 1921.

It is a good thing to have a library in every union branch, but it is much better to have the right books in it, and to use every

opportunity to recommend them. *The Post* (16-12-22), in the notes of the Central Telegraph Office, had such a recommendation and we were pleased to see four Plebs publications high in the list. If the national official Labour journals favour the W.E.A. and Ruskin College, don't forget to get into your own trade union journal.

We have been reproved by one reader because in the Introduction to the Plebs *Outline of Economics* by implication we favour the Capital Levy, instead of denouncing it as a mere crutch for shaky capitalism. He quotes Bonar Law's earlier support, and says it is strange to find Mr. Hichens (Cammel, Laird & Co.) and The PLEBS in the same boat. It is easy to see that if the capitalists were wise they would adopt the War Debt Redemption Fund proposal—especially those of them who are looking to future Surplus Value and feeling the millstone of high taxation pulling them back in world competition. Even the other sections, who hold claims on Surplus Value, and who are somewhat removed from industry and only indirectly interested in its expansion, would be well advised to yield a part to remain in possession of the remainder.

But while that is agreed by the far-sighted capitalists, the majority of them will instinctively fight strenuously any encroachments upon capital. Perhaps they are wise.

The struggle—the fierceness of which the Labour Party leaders underestimate—will demonstrate how impersonal capital is; that share claims to it can change hands umpteen thousand times without interfering at all with the actual running of the business. [According to the Report of the Inland Revenue Commissioners, 18 per cent. of estates above £5,000 in value represent Government and municipal securities; 32 per cent. represent shares in joint stock companies.] The investigation will show the manipulations of capital that are carried through to disguise the rate of profit. Forty-six per cent. of the tax revenue is necessary to pay the interest on the National Debt. The Capital Levy would considerably lessen if not entirely remove that. We know that if all the food taxes were removed that might mean lower wages. But an opportunity would be provided to fight for a higher standard of life. That is why on this issue we can join in.

In a sense it is true that the Paris Commune closed a period of Socialist history. The defeat of the Commune proved that at the moment the workers were too weak or the bourgeoisie too strong for an armed revolt to succeed. Therefore we get the beginning of the reformist "Second International" period. But the Paris Commune was not the last revolt of its kind. There was

a serious Spanish Commundard movement in 1873, and revolutionary "Juntas" were in control for a while in many towns. In two, Alcoy and San Lucar de Barrameda, the International was predominant. But no proper investigation has been made into it, by bourgeois historians or others. Perhaps some Pleb who knows Spanish or Spanish history can oblige.

For an interesting glimpse into the mentality of a self-made man we recommend *Lord Leverhulme's Illusions* (2d., S.D.F.). The question whether a man can earn £100,000 a year by working provoked the correspondence now reprinted. Like others of the rare capitalists who do take an active part in business and are not absentee shareholders, Leverhulme thinks he is moving the driving wheel instead of being merely the fly upon it.

The following statement by "Wayfarer" in *The Nation* is an interesting footnote to the articles on the Ruhr in the January PELBS :—

"There is another reason why France stops her ears. The most powerful forces behind the raid in the Ruhr are not political, but economic, and M. Poincaré, who was for years the advocate of the metallurgical group, is at the back of them. There would have been no incursion into the Ruhr if the Comité des Forges could have brought off its deal for getting a 51 per cent. control of the Westphalian industries, leaving us out in the cold. The Germans communicated this plot to our Government, and as a result the anti-British feeling of the worthy directors of French finance and politics (whose special organ is the *Temps*) comes next to their anti-German fury."

There has been talk during the last few weeks of a Continental Alliance between France, Belgium and Italy. Italy is dependent on foreign coal, and so has a strong interest in securing a share in any arrangement about the Ruhr. The Paris Press for a time was full of this proposal. *The Times* Paris correspondent (February 26th) quoted the *Echo National* as saying that "the project for rapprochement emanates from the whole Italian commercial world, and it is asserted that the representative of a great bank of German creation is taking part in it. The *Oeuvre* notes that this advance coincides with the endeavour of the Italian Government to put on a sound footing a considerable metallurgical enterprise in the Peninsula." *The Times* correspondent went on to say that in Paris "there emerges clearer than ever before the theory that the ore fields of Lorraine and the coalfields of Westphalia are inseparable, and that their reunion must be achieved by one means or another. That at the end of the present stage of the French operations in the Ruhr there should be some more or less voluntary arrangement with the metallurgical magnates of Germany seems to be the increasing desire of French industrial circles." What The PELBS talks about in January, the *Times* begins to discuss in February !

## NOTE-TAKING at LECTURES

**A**LTHOUGH I agree with the general tenour of "A Teacher's" article in the March PLEBS, yet my experience of note-taking by students during lectures by no means agrees with his. Not that I forbid note-taking, because there are usually one or two among one's pupils who can take satisfactory notes; but I never measure the success of a lecture by the amount of note-taking I see going on; and indeed, if I see among a new group of students a general tendency to take notes, I warn them of the difficulties connected with note-taking.

My line is usually this on such occasions. Note-taking involves a division of objective. The student is trying to do two things at once; to follow the lecture and to make notes. Frequently, indeed, usually, he falls between the two stools. His notes are as a rule a few sentences behind the speaker; and the strain of his constant effort to catch up and keep pace with the speaker becomes so great that he has practically no energy left for intelligently following the lecture itself. Consequently he does not fully understand the drift of the lecture, in some cases a business that may make heavy demands on the pupil's energies—and his notes represent nothing but a jumbled-up summary of a half-understood subject—and what is the value of such a record as a means of revising what the lecturer has said?

The ordinary note-taker is to my mind lacking in faith. He sets his heart upon a record; upon some external summary to which he can turn in case he forgets what he has heard. Revision, recapitulation are his obsessions. But he has within him if he can only believe it, a recording machine of far greater effectiveness than any hastily written notes he may be able to scribble during a lecture. Some of the best students I have known never made any notes at all. They gave all their energies to following and understanding the lecture. They were prepared to interrupt if at any point they did not grasp the sequence of the lecture; and when they got home they immediately made

a précis of all they had remembered; the précis being rather in the nature of a consolidation of the position won during the lecture than a memorandum of the lecture.

In this way they assimilated the subject matter; digested it, made it so completely part of their mental texture that it was finally incorporated in their minds; and they could no more really forget what they had thus assimilated than a man can forget how to swim.

A subject so acquired is a real addition to one's knowledge. A subject acquired unintelligently, by mechanical methods like learning by heart or by routine note-taking, never becomes real knowledge because it is never assimilated. It remains an alien substance within the brain; a clog and burden, and as such a source of weakness rather than strength; a brick instead of a lump of coal in the fire.

I feel therefore that insistence on note-taking or even undue encouragement of note-taking may easily divert the energies of students from their real objective which is as full an understanding as possible of their subject at the moment when that understanding is most worth while, *i.e.*, during the actual progress of the lecture (*not* afterwards when one is puzzling over one's note hieroglyphics). If notes are really needed—and they may well be—the lecturer should give opportunities for their being written by making breaks or pauses for the purpose and thus enabling his pupils to concentrate on one thing at a time; or he might even occasionally dictate a short note of first-rate importance.

Lectures are of value, not as a means of epitomising and summarising a subject and so saving students the trouble of reading up the subject themselves, but rather as arousing interest in the subject and putting it in its relation with other subjects. Thus, when two teachers differ on such a fundamental question as note-taking it seems obvious that only by discussion and the comparing of experiences can one arrive at practical teaching methods.

ANOTHER TEACHER.

## Disproportion or Surplus Product

**D**EAR COMRADE,—In the February PLEBS Comrade Dobb writes that Hobson's theory of over-saving might lead to a negation of the class-struggle, through the belief that the capitalists might be made to disgorge more and more of their surplus-value till it finally disappeared. The same accusation, it seems to me, might be made of the theory of mal-distribution of investment, and much more plausibly, just because surplus-value is not the main point stressed. We can see that by financial and industrial combines the capitalists are more and more controlling production; and I suppose they hope one day to succeed in completely doing so and in eliminating crises.

We want, however, an explanation of crises not because of the effect we think it will have on people's minds but because it is an explanation of crises; and any true analysis *must* help the struggle in the right direction whether it is the one we wish it, for the moment, to go in or not. Otherwise we are left with an anarchistic and subjective determination of both the class-struggle and economics. We must derive our theory from the objective world of capitalism.

Retaining capitalism, let us eliminate mal-distribution of production, and look at over-investment or "over-saving" by itself, as Dobb does. If you start with proportionate, harmonious production and double every thing, quite naturally the result will be doubly harmonious, and the statement itself a simple mathematical platitude. But growing capitalism is not just like that; being cumulative, as Dobb knows, the surplus-value increases from year to year (other things being equal) if it is totally reinvested instead of being consumed.

If *c. v. s.* represent the constant capital the variable capital and the surplus-value of the whole productive process, in harmonious proportions, we get (with the investment of *s.*) *c. + v. + s.* the second year, and (with the reinvestment of *s. +*), *c. + + v. + + s. + +* the third year. Now the case for an unimpeded reinvestment of

this ever-increasing surplus (*s. + + + + . . . .*) rests on an unlimited supply of labour-power in the proper proportions for its utilisation.

But accumulation of capital goes on much faster than the natural increase of the necessary population, and if all other sources of labour-power are eliminated there must come a time when there is an accumulation of goods, means of consumption and means of production, which can't be utilised productively inside the system even though in the proper proportions with each other (these proportions being decided by the composition of capital). That is, there is no market for the disposal of the accumulated surplus-values of society.

This is one reason why there must be an outlet in a "foreign" market for the capitalist export of surplus-value, if capitalism is to grow. Apart from the export to a "foreign" market, which is ruled out by our hypothesis, there are only two ways, so far as I can see, out of this impasse:—

(a) The non-consuming capitalists could raise the consumption of the working class to take in all the surplus if produced in the proper form that is not needed for renewal and extension—resulting in the suicide of capitalism. It would not only dig its own grave but cut its own throat. Is it likely? A variant of this position would be a sort of self-contained industrial feudalism with production in the proportions that would give the capitalist barons all the luxury they could consume and allow for extension and an army (both military and journalistic) to preserve law and order, and the "proper spirit." But this is ruled out by our hypothesis, and, in any case, can scarcely happen in present conditions of capitalist development; there must be many crises of different kinds before then.

(b) A distribution among the workers of the accumulated non-profit-making goods, over and above what was needed for extension, might be forced by the organised attack of the working class.

This would amount to communism, or some form of socialism, and the negation of capitalist surplus-value.

The surplus can't be given to the

workers as wages in the usual manner since they are already getting, more or less, their labour-power value. To do anything more would alter the status of labour in the system and so alter the nature of the system itself.

Though there is a wage lag in any boom in actual capitalism as we know it; this wage lag would disappear in such a closed system if capitalism tried to redistribute its surplus within the system and the wage-system itself would be replaced by another which, as I have tried to show above, would necessarily be different from capitalism.

We are left then, if this analysis is sound, with masses of surplus-value seeking profitable markets and fields of investment. Whereas in the early days of English capitalism the labour supply came from the hills and the dales of rural England, Ireland and Scotland, in addition to the increase of population itself, capital to-day moves abroad, in its expansion, to keep its profits up and drag under its soulless wheels the cheap labour of the more undeveloped peoples of the earth. This has been a historic process. One accumulating and maturing society after another lending to, and investing in, younger and more undeveloped communities, till they in turn lend to others.

On the other hand, it is quite possible for a communistic society to "over-produce" without a crisis, as was actually done by some of the Communist groups of the Anabaptists in earlier times. There was simply a distribution of the results of the surplus sold outside; or some of it was used in other ways for the general good. Economically this is not over-production but division of labour. It seems to me that the main disease is the accumulation of surplus-value, in the shape of masses of goods, both productive and consumptive, for which the capitalist class is unable to find a market and thus utilise for the further creation of profit, and which the workers can't consume under a wage-system.

It is this accumulation of surplus-value, almost mechanically so far as the capitalist class is concerned, that is the dynamic force in capitalism; and in studying the static problem of adjustment we must visualise it as a result of this accumulation forced

on the capitalist and combined with his desire for the most advantageous investment.

This, at least, seems to me a more accurate way to look at the dynamic contradictions in capitalist society during its crises periods, and gives, at the same time, a clearer conception of all that is involved for the two classes in society, as a result of these crises. It also points the way to a solution through the control of social production by the workers and the elimination of surplus-value from the process.

Yours fraternally,

A. M. ROBERTSON.

P.S.—I wish also to enter a protest against Comrade Dickinson's Unemployment theory; his percentage figure is totally inadequate to represent the problem, but I have used enough of your space for the moment.

[Dobb will reply next month. We include the next letter because, while it was written before the above controversy arose, it deals with the same matter and will help new readers to appreciate the points at issue.—Ed.]

#### MARXISTS IN A MESS.

DEAR COMRADE,—It was the following sentence in M. H. Dobb's Syllabus on *The Development of Capitalism* (p. 17) that renewed the problem to me. "There can never be chronic over-production of all goods; . . ." Then followed the summary of how means for production are being over-produced relatively to means of subsistence. This certainly pictures "the altogether disproportionate development of engineering and constructional trades during the War," as Mainwaring called it in *PLEBS* (Sept., 1921) when explaining the post-war World Crisis.

But there were pre-war Crises—rows of them—and before machinery was widely produced. Expansion in search of new purchasing power did not merely begin with the export of capital goods. And Boudin, *Socialism and War*, p. 66, says: "The basis of all capitalist industrial development is the fact that the working-class produces not only more than it consumes, but more than society as a whole consumes." Again in his earlier *Theoretical System* (pp. 235-39) he speaks about this

surplus product as being an additional and more fundamental cause of crises than the anarchy of production which now expresses itself in a relative over-development of machinery and such like production. He argues that there must be a law because of the regularity in the recurring crises.

If Boudin is right, Dobb is wrong, for the former insists that relative to capitalist society there is chronic over-production. His whole explanation of Imperialism is based on the increased difficulty caused by the disposal of that surplus product when, by the natural "progress" of capitalism, iron and steel commodities are exported rather than textiles. He pointed out that the tendency to unified control by the Trusts, who could eliminate the disproportion between one branch of industry and another did not lessen the export to a foreign market.

Luxemburg criticises the Marxian mathematical formulæ showing the required proportions as being only applicable in a completely capitalist world. [These formulæ are simplified and summarised in *The People's Marx*.] They were an abstract theoretical investigation of the conditions under which capitalism could expand. Historically capitalism has drawn its raw material from non-capitalist layers or countries and also sold its product to them. She traces Imperialism not so much to the change in the surplus product—cotton to iron—as the needs of capitalism because of its own internal laws continually to expand the scale of production. That means that the capitalists cannot mutually exchange their surpluses, but must sell part of the surplus in an outside market completely absorbent and so get the means to enlarge their businesses.

Others argue that the preservation of the delicate equilibrium, between the two main branches of production, which is necessary for the compulsory expanding of production will never be possible under capitalism. They explain Imperialism from the desire by investors to avoid the falling rate of profit in the more advanced countries by exporting their capital. Varga, in *The Progress of Capitalist Decline* (1922): "Capital seeks to overcome the falling tendency of the profit rates by various

means. Through organising cartell, trusts, mergers at which centralised capital reduces the *faux frais* of the sphere of circulation and wrests a part of the profit from commercial capital and increases its own rate of profit through fixing monopoly prices at the expense of other classes. Above all, however, through *exporting capital* to countries where the necessary time is shorter, the rate of surplus value and profit higher. In order to render the exploitation of these regions possible, they must be made pliable to the demands of capital, *i.e.*, they must be subjugated. The capital of every highly developed industrial country in order to retard the falling rate of profit is compelled to subdue large colonial regions, and it does not shrink from a war for the protection or conquest of new investment spheres, which are to be converted into monopoly markets." Bukharin (p. 59, *seq. A.B.C. Communism*) views Imperialism as the old crises in another form, and says nothing of a surplus product.

My own suggested explanation is this. A surplus product in the Boudin sense does not mean that capitalist society (while remaining capitalist) could not consume its total product if it were in a suitable form. If it were a completely capitalist world an exchange could and would be arranged between each section until means of production, of subsistence and of luxury consumption would be produced exactly in the desired proportions. That would be virtually conscious control by a World Trust and competition and capitalism in its present form would be completely ended. But in actual practice there are differing surpluses, both in their size and incidence, and competing capitals. An equilibrium is impossible and maladjustment of industries inevitable. The world has pre-capitalist areas and rival capitalists hunt here the more easily obtainable purchasing power. Incidentally nowadays no nation is self-sufficient and in this expansion goods unobtainable at home are found and also the necessary quantity of raw materials including labour-power.

Yours fraternally,  
M. S.

# THE PLEBS LETTERS

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LETTER FROM A FOREIGN EDITOR.

DEAR COMRADE,—Criticism is right enough, but it ought to be accurate. As a matter of fact the *Daily Herald* "began to talk about the Dariac report" not on January 3rd, but on November 3rd, and that is a bit different.

Yours fraternally,

W. N. E.

*Foreign Editor, Daily Herald.*

[W. N. E.'s reference is to a paragraph in our "Class Room Notes" of February. We apologise for our error. But did the *Herald* talk much about the Dariac report between Nov. 3rd and Jan. 3rd?—ED.]

THE IMPERIALISM TEXTBOOK.

DEAR COMRADE,—Perhaps you will allow one who, whatever else he may be deficient in, certainly can hardly be charged with excessive youth, to make a few comments on this somewhat dangerous topic—at the risk of shewing himself as belonging to that category which rushes in where angels fear to tread.

Frankly, I am disappointed with your textbook. I hoped that our Marxist school would in the practice shew its superiority in the practice and surely this textbook ought to have been such an example.

Secondly, I hoped that such a collaboration of many minds working together would shew its superiority to the individual work of isolated workers. It was just because in the old days I had felt the hopeless inadequacy of my own and other individual efforts as Marxists to achieve anything here in Great Britain—that I fixed so much the greater hopes on what younger men with youthful minds and working in teams might accomplish.

But when I look at your textbook I ask myself what advance it represents from the point of view of the analysis of the forces at work in that which we know as Imperialism—in distinguishing the real nature of the problem involved and the task that is before the workers—when compared, say, with the work of Brailsford, *The War of*

*Steel and Gold*, published it will be remembered before the war and circulated by the W.E.A., or the whole series of pamphlets and books published by the U.D.C., the I.L.P., &c. I find it difficult to find any advance at all. The book seems to me little more than an enlarged U.D.C. pamphlet—and I ask myself where in that case is the great difference between the Labour College and the W.E.A. methods?

Yours fraternally,

J. B. ASKEW.

AN ACCEPTED REPLY.

SIR,—In your issue for March you make one statement which compels notice.

You write:—

"One word more, and this a quite serious one. Comrade Dutt refers graciously to the 'budding snobs' turned out by the Labour College; and, in another paragraph, to Plebs 'hobbies.' Thomas Ashcroft, the author of the first draft of the Imperialism book, is one of these 'snobs.' His work on the book was done for no financial reward, and for very little in the way of publicity. In both respects he, and many another Plebs Worker, compares favourably with some of his critics."

As this dirty suggestion affects me, not simply personally, but as a working member of the Communist Party in responsible positions, I am compelled to give the necessary information.

My total income from all sources is £5 a week as Editor of the *Workers' Weekly*. All other work that I am doing, including editorship of the *Labour Monthly*, is unpaid. Previous to editing the *Workers' Weekly*, I received £6 a week as Editor of the *Labour Monthly*. This was also total income from all sources, and ceased immediately on taking up the new work.

Yours faithfully,

R. PALME DUTT.

J. F. H. writes:—Whether my "suggestion" was "dirtier" than Dutt's suggestion, in his review of the Imperialism Textbook, that "Plebs' authors" were afraid to write what they knew to be true through "fear of ill-will

of Trade Union officials," I will leave to his readers and mine to decide. Again and again in that review he sought to convey the impression that it was a not uncommon characteristic of Plebs to put the getting of "kudos" for themselves in front of other considerations. I felt it desirable, therefore, to emphasise the fact that all the work done on the Imperialism Textbook—and on all Plebs textbooks and publications—was (1) unpaid, and (2) brought the authors decidedly less publicity than some editors, for instance, secure.

I neither said, nor intended to imply, that Dutt was receiving large sums for his work for the movement. What I did—and do—intend to imply, is that "dirty" imputations as to the motives and ambitions of *voluntary* workers in a movement come ill from a *paid* worker—even though the latter's payment be inadequate.

#### R. P. D. AND OURSELVES.

DEAR COMRADE EDITOR,—Sometime ago you opened the columns of The PLEBS to the W.E.A., and replied paragraph by paragraph; an excellent way of dealing with an opponent.

R. W. Postgate in his skilful reply to the unfair attack levelled against The PLEBS and its publications avoided anything in the nature of cheap wit. This can hardly be said of J. F. H. in the Bookshelf column.

In what way is the cheap witticism and unnecessary libelling of a comrade likely to help the movement or even assist the critic to see the error of his ways?

Open your columns to R. P. Dutt and reply as you did to the W.E.A. Space in The PLEBS is too valuable for abuse and our cause built on too firm a foundation to need gutter-press methods to defend it.

Yours fraternally,

WARRINGTON.

F. LOWE.

[Our columns, now as before, are open.—ED.]

DEAR EDITOR,—I have read with interest (and agreement) your remarks about R. P. Dutt's attack on the Labour College movement *via* the medium of a review of the Plebs textbook on Imperialism.

Is Dutt's attack the result of

"orders" from the Third International? If so, it would appear that Moscow is somehow or other being misinformed, and it is time the people there were notified that we intend going on with the Labour College movement whatever the British Communist Party or its leaders here may say or do.

Yours fraternally,

F. C. B.

#### HOUSMAN AND CAPITALISM.

DEAR COMRADE,—You will, I hope, allow me to protest that I did *not* say that the M.C.H. (or more correctly, the material conditions of their surroundings) did not affect individuals. Of course it does, or it would be nonsense. And if our knowledge of individual psychology and its laws were reasonably complete, no doubt we should be able to look at any individual and say "Thus and thus did his economic conditions affect his mind." Unfortunately, dear Comrade, even with the aid of your Psychology Textbook our knowledge is very far from complete, and I must maintain that to argue, *in the absence of any direct evidence* or any personal knowledge of the individual, that the economic conditions of capitalism *must be* the cause of this and that about him is silly in itself and liable to misconstruction.

Postgate complains that my phrase "profound pessimism" is no explanation, because the cause is unstated. Precisely: I don't explain because I have no explanation which I have any reason to believe. I am a scientific observer noting a fact, not a philosopher who must find a reason. But if Postgate must have an explanation, I will offer him a few to choose from. (a) Professor Housman suffers with his digestion; (b) Professor Housman is unhappily married; (c) Professor Housman has never received that recognition from his academic colleagues to which his talents entitle him; (d) Professor Housman suffers from claustrophobia, but has to lecture in stuffy lecture-rooms. Take your choice. There is no reason to believe any one of them true—and there is no reason to believe Postgate's true either, except that he believes it. He is not arguing; he's a-telling of you.

Perhaps, if Housman understood

what was the cause of all he lamented, he would not have been so sterile. Perhaps not—and again, perhaps he would. This line of argument is also sterile, as it also rests merely upon opinion. But observe, that Postgate assumes here that the cause of *all* that Housman laments is the capitalist system—a rash assumption. Let me repeat, that the capitalist system is not the cause of *all* evils—it is not, for example, the cause of an east wind—and that a propagandist who assumes it is and propagands accordingly is likely to be soon found out and his cause to sink with him.

Finally, if the W.E.A. agrees with me (assuming Postgate to be correct in that statement), so much the better for it. There is no greater error than to assume that your opponent always lies, and to scurry off in a fright as soon as you find him saying the same thing as yourself. Even the Rt. Hon. ———— must sometimes speak the truth. And now, dear Comrade, having performed my humble function as a stimulant, may I hope that Postgate will not again let his intelligence fall asleep.

Yours fraternally,  
LEMCO.

## REVIEWS

### OLD WINE, BEAUTIFUL WOMEN, AND ECONOMICS

*Plain Economics.* John Lee, M.A. (Pitman, 3s. 6d.)

*Money, Credit and Commerce.* A. Marshall. (Macmillan, 10s.)

The first book is an ideal book for a W.E.A. class. Mr. Lee states he "hesitates to take definite sides" and aims at "pale neutrality." Consequently he takes the wrong side; gets his caricature of the Labour Theory of Value from Clay (Does not wine increase in value without human labour? he asks bibulously); adopts the final utility theory only, instead of plates of soup takes buckets of water—apparently because these can be used to throw on stray cats and the garden—falls into a grievous mess about the meaning of capital—"Thus my pen is capital; my brain is capital"; welcomes Whitley Councils after they have gone up in smoke—conciliation boards which the employers now disdain to use; digs up some Appleton garbage in attacks on the miners and railwaymen; and smiles upon Sir John Beynon's suggestion that he and others should be "bought out." This is one of Mr. Lee's neutral conclusions. . . . "the life of the cultured comfortable classes, with its beautiful women, its shady gardens, its pleasing social functions, is an aspect of human relationship which one would rather extend than destroy."

*Money, Credit and Commerce* is the first half of the last portion of the trilogy of Marshall. This began in 1890 with *Principles of Economics* which was followed by *Industry and Trade* nearly thirty years later, and we presume the *Nunc Dimittis* will be sung when the latter half of this present work appears.

As B. Woolf pointed out in the March PLEBS to Marshall, everything in the capitalist garden is lovely—at least could be if one or two tiny snails, e.g., "the temporary unemployment caused by machinery" were gently treated with salt. That is the unstated assumption underneath all these monuments of scholarship. This is the final peroration in which he soars ever so high for a tame sparrow but not out of capitalism: "However great may be our distrust of forcible socialism, we are rapidly getting to feel that no one can lay his head on his pillow at peace with himself, who is not giving something of his time and substance to diminish the number of the outcasts of society; and to increase yet further the number of those who can earn a reasonable income, and thus have the opportunity of living a noble life." Peaceful pillows for professors.

Apart from this, the volume contains a wealth of descriptive information about trade money, credit, index numbers and so forth, with ten lengthy appendices and many geometrical diagrams. There are tentative proposals

of Symmetalism—using gold and silver together for international currency—and for the creation of an official unit of general purchasing power for long-period obligations. Altogether a useful reference book for a library.

M. S.

HISTORY OF OUR OWN TIMES  
*Labour and Capital in Parliament.*  
(Labour Research Dept., 1s.)

This little volume of the L.R.D. "Studies in Labour and Capital" is in keeping with the high standard set up by the two preceding volumes of the series. It is an invaluable collection of facts and figures for students of political and parliamentary affairs.

The introduction and the chapters dealing with the growth of representation in Parliament are a concise and lucid statement of how Parliament has risen to its present legal and historic position, and of the struggles to achieve this development.

The chapters showing the amount of representation of Capital and the immense amount of wealth controlled by the members of both Houses, who are staunch upholders of "Law and Order," bring out most strikingly the error, still made by many people, that Politics and Finance are in no way connected. The division of Appendix II. into two sections showing the respective financial interests in the "Tory" and "Liberal" camps would have been a decided change for the good.

The pamphlet is well worth studying by every worker who takes an active interest in present-day politics.

F. A. D. S.

#### LIBERAL SOCIALISM.

*England. A National Policy for Labour.*  
By Harry Roberts. Introduction by the Rt. Hon. J. R. Clynes. (Lab. Pub. Co., 1s.)

To this author democracy and socialism are the rationalisation of the doctrine that in the eyes of God all men are equal (p. 25). If the reader finds this difficult to understand the present writer can only sympathise with him.

During the war the bulk of Christians tied their God to the wheel of the national cannon. The Universal became

the Particular. Roberts, with other ends in view, makes a similar change: "The policy for England should be a genuine English one, not a French or a Russian, or a German one." Why this should be so is not over clear, for we read on page 20 "Germans are people very like ourselves, with similar impulses, tasks, fears and hopes." It is still less clear in his general principle, unless we are indeed God's Englishmen, and the rest of mankind the offspring of the devil.

Our author has made discoveries. Thus "the most banal thing about the Labour movement" is "that it has taken over from the Liberals that pious habit of worshipping words without attaching any meaning to them." We have long suspected this. But what a pity our author did not indulge in a little introspection! He might then have made the further discovery that his own thought is Liberal (Right of man, society is biologic, national policy, revolution and democracy are so incompatible, Socialism, not through class struggle but by the triumph of Reason, etc.). Capitalist Liberal thought views men as citizens, babbles of "majorities" and "minorities," thereby disguising the class character of "democratic" states. Roberts is a Liberal who thinks he is a Socialist. It is fitting that a Right Honourable should have written an introductory note.

W. H. R.

#### FOR OFFICE USE.

*Business Methods and Accounting in Trade Unions.* By Joseph Lynch. (Lab. Pub. Co., 12s. 6d.)

Enthusiasm is of little use without knowledge. The most brilliant articles are spoilt if proofs are corrected carelessly. Even genius cannot ignore method. In this book the author has compiled a wealth of information about every possible technical detail concerning trade union office work. Nothing is taken for granted. All is fully described, from the filing of letters and newspaper cuttings, and the preparation of a balance sheet, to answering the telephone and correcting proofs.

And there is much advice which people not in trade union offices would find useful about such matters.

S. K.

## CAPITAL LEVY.

*The Capital Levy Explained.* By Hugh Dalton. (Lab. Pub. Co., Is.)

Many who wax indignant over bond-holders receiving £332 millions interest in 1921-2, seem quite unconcerned with the *primary* exploitation of wage-labour in all capitalist businesses. Yet it is in relation to this latter fact only that the capital levy can possess significance for the wage-earners. This holds true for the Labour Party, whose claim to distinction is, that it, alone, "insists on Democracy in industry as well as in Government." Democracy in industry means the destruction of capitalism. What connection exists between Dalton's \* views and this aim? "The fourth alternative to the capital Levy is complete repudiation of the Debt. It is well outside the range of practical politics at present and is likely to remain so. But prolonged and recalcitrant opposition to the Levy might alter the situation and make it a live issue. This would be very uncomfortable for the propertied classes, for the proposal summarily to abolish one form of property would soon lead to proposals to abolish others likewise. Those who praise 'stability' and 'security' should not deliberately encourage the evolution of political thought along such lines" (page 20). The Levy, therefore, will preserve, not destroy, the propertied classes. It promises them more. Replying to an objection (page 59), he writes: "No existing real capital will be 'taken' by the Levy or prevented from continuing to earn (!) dividends. A change in the ownership of some of a company's shares will not affect its ability to pay dividends, which will, indeed, be subsequently *increased* by the reduction of annual taxation."

To be sure, Dalton does believe that the Levy will help the wage-workers, reducing indirect food taxes, permitting greater expenditure on health, etc. But would these benefits be commensurate with the effort to obtain them? Dalton and the Labour Party are clearly looking to owners of moder-

\* Dalton was a Labour party candidate at the General Election.

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ate fortunes to help them secure the Levy.

But the price of such support could only be substantial income tax reduction. Harnessed to the moderate fore-armed property owners the workers could hope for little. To put the issue more concretely: What support among the propertied classes will the Levy obtain if the first charge upon the proceeds is to be the provision of maintenance at T.U. rates for all unemployed workers? The Levy has other possibilities than those indicated by our author. It is for this reason that we regard the book as one to be read, and its well stocked arsenal of economic facts, applied in accordance with I.W.C.E. aims.

W. H. R.

A "LABOUR PIONEER."  
*Recollections of a Labour Pioneer.* By F. W. Soutter. (Fisher Unwin. Price unstated.)

It is not very clear why Mr. Soutter is described as a "Labour pioneer." He assisted in the Southwark by-election of 1869 when George Odger went unsuccessfully to the poll. But in fact nearly all his activities were inside the Liberal and Radical movements. His memories are chiefly of secularist fights and Liberal big-heads, and although the book is amusingly written, it is trivial in matter and not of great interest to us.

There is a foreword by T. P. O'Connor, P. P.

## The PLEBS Page

**T**HE result of the ballot vote is as follows:—For the Agreement, 157. Against, 4. For the Resolution, 160. Against the resolution, 1. Both were therefore carried by majorities big enough to be seen by the naked eye! Six hundred voting papers were sent out, so that taking the figures to hand as representative, we can assume that the membership of the League are with the Executive in their recommendation to accept the agreement, in the best interests of the I.W.C.E. movement as a whole.

One of the minority let some fireworks off at us, thus:—"This latest decision of the E.C. is entirely reactionary. 1848! It's enough to make Marx turn in his grave. Bah! . . ." And then, evidently not yet feeling that he'd ticked us off quite enough, he added a postscript:—"Scum on the cream of revolt, charging the revolutionary atmosphere with reformist contents—that is your function!" And he wouldn't renew his sub. Well, Well!!

The reminder that the membership sub. was due worked the oracle in quite a number of cases, but for those whose eyes it failed to catch we repeat it! You are not a member of the League unless you have paid up one shilling for the year 1923. It does not matter how many previous bobs you have sent along, or even if you are the one and only founder of the League!—if we haven't had that shilling this year we don't know your name even! So take note!!

The closing down of the Book Department is gradually making a difference to our receipts, so that we are asking all our comrades to pay up any debt they owe us as promptly as they can. One or two comrades have still got rather hefty bills standing in their names. We hate to adopt a hectoring tone (being meek and lowly of heart) but we shall certainly have to do so unless the needful rolls in a little quicker! A good many of our lads know all about money and the Bank rate and the

exchange rate and what Value is and what makes profits; *but* when they get a bill they look at it as if it had come out of Tutankhamen's tomb and they didn't know what it meant. When you get a bill it means that we want money. We don't write to you because we can't find ought else to do—so please take note and shell out.

The sad news of the death of a comrade comes to us from Chepstow. Comrade Frank Matthews, who was active in the London movement, was accidentally killed at Swansea dockyard on Feb. 20th by the collapse of a crane. Comrade Matthews was a member of the N.U.R. and when resident in London helped to start classes for I.W.C.E., and was also a delegate to the London Trades Council. He had been working just previous to his accident in Chepstow and the secretary of the Chepstow class writes that he will be sadly missed by all the comrades there. Chepstow is a backward place from the Labour point of view, and Comrade Matthews was secretary of the local Labour Party at the time of his death. London friends who knew him and comrades in the whole movement will join us in expressing deep sympathy with his widow and three children.

We have reluctantly had to notify various comrades that Craik's *Short History of the British Working Class Movement* (paper edition) is out of print, but a comrade writes that he has a number of copies for disposal. Anyone wanting the paper-covered edition should write to E. Redfern, 1, Langdale Avenue, Reddish, Stockport, who can supply at 2s. 2d. post free. We can supply cloth-bound copies at 3s. 6d. (postpaid, 3s. 9d.).

Will Comrade A. L. Davies, late of Pentwyn Road, Ammanford, send us his address? W. H.

## N.C.L.C. ITEMS and NOTES

**W**HITSUN School at Kew.—Early information from students proposing to be present at this school is requested. The Kew College is temporarily closed, so that special arrangements will need to be made for the housing and feeding of visitors. The school will be held from Saturday, May 19th, to Saturday, May 26th. This period can be extended to a fortnight if sufficient applicants desire. The latest date for receiving applications will be April 20th. Accommodation is limited, so that final choice will have to be made after all applications are to hand. The inclusive charge will be 6s. per day, all fees to be paid in advance. (Students will be expected to make their own beds and to assist a little with the serving and clearing up of meals.) The school will be devoted to the needs of prospective class tutors—how to teach Economics, History, and our other main subjects—and special syllabuses will be prepared. As full a day's work as possible at lectures, preparation of material, discussions, etc., will be expected of all students. If weather permits the classes will be held in the garden of the College. Our thanks are due to the governors for the use of the College and to the staff for their proffered lecture services.

*National Lantern Slide Scheme.*—Syllabuses of the whole of the sets of slides already prepared are now in the possession of the secretaries of the affiliated bodies, who are requested to write direct to J. Hamilton, 99, Botanic Road, Liverpool, on all matters appertaining to syllabuses, the loan or purchase of slides, etc.

*Proposed Annual Report—Urgent.*—The circulars sent out to affiliated bodies recently asking for material relating to local activities for inclusion in the report has not, up to the present, been generally answered. The attention of all secretaries is drawn to this matter, as early preparation and issue of the report is urgent.

*North Eastern Labour College.*—An Easter School is to be held at the Socialist Hall, Royal Arcade, Pilgrim

Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne, commencing on Saturday, 31st March, at 2.30 p.m. The lecturer will be W. H. Mainwaring, Senior Tutor of Economics of the Labour College, London. Meetings will also be held Saturday evening at 7 p.m.; Sunday, 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.; Monday, 11 a.m.; at the same venue. A number of prominent northern trade unionists are booked as chairmen for the meetings, and a record attendance seems inevitable. The College has had a very successful year, and has done particularly well in the matter of the A.U.B.T.W. scheme. The affiliated bodies number seventy-two, and include Miners' Lodges, A.S.W., N.U.R., A.E.U., N.U.A.W., N.U.C., N.U.F.W., N.A.F.T.A., Labour Co-operative Socialist and Communist branches, and Working Men's Clubs. Twenty-six

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classes are running at present, almost entirely by voluntary workers, and are being added to almost daily. All workers in the North East Area desirous of obtaining further information should apply to the energetic secretary, W. Coxon, 5, Byron Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

*North East Lancs Area Council.*—The new secretary of this Council, J. H. Sharpe, 40, William Street, Clayton-le-Moors, Accrington, reports that the work is going well under the newly-formed Council. All comrades in the district willing to assist in extension and development of the Council's activities are requested to communicate with the secretary immediately.

*A.U.B.T.W. Educational Scheme.*—Good reports of progress have been received from Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

and 7 Divisions. It is proposed to hold a conference of those organising areas on the 7th April, in London, to discuss future plans. Educational organisers moving about from place to place and not receiving notice should write direct to the general secretary, 11, Penywern Road, London, S.W. 5.

*Affiliation Fees.*—Affiliation fees for 1923 have been received from Mansfield and District Labour College, Midland District Council, Liverpool Labour College, London Council and Cardiff and District I.W.C.E., West Riding Council, Manchester Labour College, and Edinburgh District Committee, S.L.C. Will other secretaries please note!

*N.C.L.C. Notes Reports.*—Secretaries are reminded that these should reach the general secretary by the 12th of the month, for inclusion in the next month's PLEBS.

## The PLEBS Bookshelf

### FRAZER'S "GOLDEN BOUGH"

**T**HIRTY years ago Mr. J. G. Frazer, now "Sir James," published a two-volume study upon the Priesthood at Nemi. It was an inquiry into the rule by which the priest of the wood at Aricia, a small town in Italy in the Roman days, was always killed by his successor. Whoever killed him became the priest. In solving this question Mr. Frazer covered a very large area of primitive custom and thought. It was at once recognised as a work of importance, and later was expanded into no less than twelve large volumes. By this time this obscure inquiry had become an immense encyclopædia of the mind and belief of early man. It has now been recondensed, with difficulty, into a single large volume which the general reader can manage.\*

Blatchford, in the days when he was Blatchford, said of the *Golden Bough* "This is one of the books that unmake history." He was not exaggerating, and a reading of the small edition confirms one in the belief that this is one of the few books that really do

matter. Although it is remarkable value in mere print for the eighteen shillings, few workers can buy it, but fortunately Sir James' reputation in "respectable" circles is so high that there can be few libraries indeed in England that would refuse to buy a copy if asked by a reader. It is not a book, of course, to take out instead of a novel in the evening: it wants some thought, which it will repay.

Frazer's book "unmakes history" in the sense that it wipes out almost entirely what had been written before. It completely alters our ideas of the history of primitive man, and in particular of the history of thought and religion. The origin of science and religion, here laid bare, is the same—magic. The savage's mind is almost entirely occupied with magic. For him the sun rises in the morning because he calls it up by magic; the spring returns and the green leaves because the magician calls them. To this end he practises horrible and filthy rites, which in many parts of the earth, including Europe, are still carried on, and have been now for thousands of years. Who, for example, is going

\* *The Golden Bough*, by Sir J. G. FRAZER. Abridged edition in one volume. (Macmillan. 18s. 7.0 pages.)

to be the first to abandon the ritual, however bloody, that calls the spring back to earth? A savage may doubt its efficacy, but, after all, the spring does come after these rites have been performed. It would not do to risk there being no spring. Indeed, it is a wonder men ever broke through the bonds of magic, not that they took so long.

A mind completely "magicked," utterly subservient to a belief in magic, is nearly a dead mind. We are apt to call the earliest age of mankind "primitive communism" as though the minds of men were mainly or considerably occupied with certain economic arrangements. But they were not so much interested in the division of the corn as in the placating, generally by murder, of the Corn Spirit whom they offended every harvest. We might do better to call it the age of magic. Anyway, this at least is certain, that it was the gradual break up of the belief in magic which made possible any progress from primitive communism. The perception of the relation of cause and effect is at the back of all rational human action.

We most of us know something about the thought of Greece and Rome, and of the collapse of what was after all an extraordinary effort of the human mind. The rational work of Greece and Rome—the beginnings of science, literature, art and philosophy—came to an end, petered out, in a mysterious way. This process is conventionally called the victory of Christianity, which was the last of a series of Oriental religions which flooded Roman society. We have perhaps concentrated too much attention to the vague communist ideas—produced by the oppressed—latent in such religious movements. What happened was not the victory of the oppressed workers, but what would happen to-day if when capitalism collapses the workers were too feeble or divided to take over. Ancient society fell from its own weaknesses, but as it fell the slaves and freedmen could not "take over"; ancient civilisation collapsed as a building sinks into a marsh. The philosophy and science of the ruling class fell, as its power waned, into the morass of slave-thought, magic and

mysticism beneath. Frazer gives us this side, writing, of course, not in the terms of the M.C.H., (p. 357) :—

"Greek and Roman society was built on the conception of the subordination of the individual to the community, of the citizen to the state; it set the safety of the commonwealth, as the supreme aim of conduct, above the safety of the individual whether in this world or in a world to come. Trained from infancy in this unselfish ideal, the citizens devoted their lives to the public service and were ready to lay them down for the common good; or if they shrank from the supreme sacrifice, it never occurred to them that they acted otherwise than basely in preferring their personal existence to the interests of their country. All this was changed by the spread of Oriental religion, which inculcated the communion of the soul with God and its eternal salvation as the only objects worth living for, objects in comparison with which the prosperity and even existence of the state sank into insignificance. The inevitable result of this selfish and immoral doctrine was to withdraw the devotee more and more from the public service, to concentrate his thoughts on his own spiritual emotions, and to breed in him a contempt for the present life which he regarded merely as a probation for a better and an eternal. The saint and recluse, disdainful of earth and rapt in ecstatic contemplation of heaven, became in popular opinion the highest ideal of humanity, displacing the old ideal of the patriot and hero who, forgetful of self, lives and is ready to die for the good of his country... A general disintegration of the body politic set in. The ties of the state and of the family were loosened: the structure of society tended to resolve itself into its individual elements and thereby to relapse into barbarism; for civilisation is only possible through the active co-operation and their willingness to subordinate their private interests to the common good. In their anxiety to save their own souls and the souls of others, they were content to leave the material world, which they

identified with the principle of evil, to perish around them.

"This obsession lasted for a thousand years. The revival of Roman law, of the Aristotelian philosophy, of ancient art and literature at the close of the Middle Ages, marked the return of Europe to native ideals of life and conduct, to saner, manlier views of the world. The long halt in the march of civilisation was over. The tide of Oriental invasions had turned at last. It is ebbing still."

Traces of magical rites are, of course, very thickly strewn in the Christian practice. Not always white magic either, but black as well. There is the case of the Mass of Saint Secaire, referred to by Frazer on p. 54.

These disjointed notes cannot conclude without mentioning Frazer's most important service, and that is the injury he does to the Christian religion. The strength of the Church as a support of oppression we all know, but the deadening influence of religion upon the minds of the workers educationists know in particular. Frazer carefully shows, without mentioning Christianity, how every essential of the Christian belief, including the Death and Resurrection of Christ, and the communion supper, are borrowed from earlier, more magical religions, and how even the dates and customs of Christmas and Easter are dates and customs of Pagan magical feasts. This destroys the comfortable stupidity of the religious man and forces him to think. It awakens his mind and frees it from the most powerful prison it knows.

In so doing Frazer is still a little afraid of his public. He seems to regard his audience as he would an ill-tempered and domineering old woman, of unreasonable prejudices, who was also fortunately rather short-sighted and very deaf. He ostentatiously

writes paragraphs and phrases designed to placate it, remarking, with conscious guile, that we do not know everything and would be wise to be humble. Then having (so to speak) quieted the old lady, he proceeds with his work of destruction.

In one case he reaches a level of irony that reminds us of Gibbon himself. He is commenting upon the fact that the date of the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ was the same as that of the resurrection of the older Pagan deity Attis (p. 361):

"In point of fact it appears from the testimony of an anonymous Christian, who wrote in the fourth century of our era, that Christians and Pagans alike were struck by the remarkable coincidence between the death and resurrection of their respective deities, and that the coincidence formed a theme of bitter controversy between the adherents of the rival religions, the Pagans contending that the resurrection of Christ was a spurious imitation of the resurrection of Attis, and the Christians asserting with equal warmth that the resurrection of Attis was a diabolical counterfeit of the resurrection of Christ. In these unseemly bickerings the heathen took what to a superficial observer might seem strong ground by arguing that their god was the older and therefore presumably the original, not the counterfeit, since as a general rule an original is older than its copy. This feeble argument the Christians easily rebutted. They admitted indeed, that in point of time Christ was the junior deity, but they triumphantly demonstrated his real seniority by falling back on the subtlety of Satan, who on so important an occasion had surpassed himself by inverting the usual order of Nature."

R. W. P.

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