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THE PLEBS

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

Vol. XVI

January, 1924.

No. 1

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TO REMIND YOU—

10s  
— AS announced in our December number, the price of The PLEBS will next month be reduced to FOURPENCE. Our readers will forgive us for using what little editorial space is left to us in this issue to renew the appeal we have already made to them.

Our object in making the reduction is simply and solely to reach

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a larger number of workers—especially a larger number of students in the various Labour College classes. We know, as we wrote last month, that sixpence is sixpence in these hard times, and a lot of people have to look at it twice before they spend it. It is equally true, of course, that fourpence is fourpence. But we're hoping that the reduction we've been able to make will bring us in *at least a couple of thousand new readers*. As we explained last month, we can't—so far as a business proposition goes—afford to reduce the price without making a corresponding reduction in the *size* of the magazine. But we're relying on that couple of thousand additional circulation to enable us to meet our printers' bills on time.

Now will every friend of ours, everywhere, help in a Big Push this month? We want to know by the 21st how many of the First-at-Fourpence we're to print.

*A Big Push  
Now*

*Will every literature secretary undertake to sell three PLEBS where now he sells two—a dozen-and-a-half where now he handles a dozen? And will he let us know about this by the 21st of this month?* Of course, if he's a man of courage and initiative he'll double his order—and earn an extra bit of our gratitude. But don't forget to let us have a card by the 21st, because we can't afford to print “on spec.,” and it will be no use writing urgent appeals to us later for additional supplies.

*And will every PLEBS reader do his darnedest to get us at least one new subscriber?* Note that our annual subscription henceforth is 5s. postpaid—five bob down, and The PLEBS delivered at your door by a bloke in uniform every month for twelve calendar months. We want as many postal subscribers as we can get. But if your pal says five bob is out of the question at the moment, nail him for fourpence monthly.

We, for our part, are going to do our best to supply value for money. This month's contents may be taken as a sample of the

*We'll Deliver  
the Goods*

goods we're out to deliver. We're not aiming at satisfying the Old Hard-baked! We want to print the sort of thing that the ordinary chap, who's keen enough on the movement to look in at classes now and then, will find interesting. There's nothing hard-baked about Tom Mann's appeal for a Six-Hour-Day Bill on another page of this issue—or George Hicks' common sense about Housing—or Lawrence's plain-speaking about the present position of the engineers. You don't need to have done two years' hard at Advanced Economics to find something to bite on in such contributions. We're out to supply more of the same stuff—and we ask you to give your friends a chance of looking at the samples. When you've read through this number, will you show it to as many likely subscribers as you can think of, and murmur “Fourpence, Forty pages, February.”

## THE PLEBS

3

We want a Push this month for our other publications also. The new Textbook is going strong; let's have the money in at your earliest—we've a big bill to meet for it next month.

*Shove 'em*

We're still busy wrapping up parcels of *What to*

*Along*

Read and Starr's *Trade Unionism: Past and Future*; have you got your supplies? And (*this*

*is important*) we want to hear, without delay, from everyone interested in the Psychology Textbook, which is at present right out of print.

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# THE PLEBS

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If we can get in sufficient orders for it this month we can re-print; if not the type will have to be broken up, and it'll probably be a long, long time before we shall be able to tackle an entirely new edition.

Money! That's our problem, as well as yours! We need *cash*—and quite a lot of folks owe us some for goods supplied. If you're one of them don't let us have to press you further. **PAY and PUSH**—it's for the Cause!

### "Our" M.P.s

The list of friends of the I.W.C.E. movement standing as Labour candidates, which we published last month, was very far from complete. We ought, for example, to have included many Scottish M.P.'s, almost all of whom are in sympathy with our movement. There were other omissions, for which we ask forgiveness; e.g. E. Archbold, who contested Wandsworth. Also, *our* George Ward stood for W. Riding, Barkston Ash (not Westbury).

# WHAT SHOULD A LABOUR GOVERNMENT DO?

*For the moment, the question of the General Council is overshadowed by the possibility of a Labour Government. If it took office, what would it do? What could it do? Our friends Tom Mann and George Hicks open the discussion.*

## PASS A SIX-HOUR-DAY BILL, SAYS TOM MANN

**G**EORGE LANSBURY'S review of my book in the last PLEBS contains references to myself of so kindly and pointed a character that a few remarks thereon may not be out of place, especially in regard to his reference to myself and the House of Commons.

This brings up the question as to the way in which the workers are to function to achieve their political and economic freedom, such freedom involving the overthrow of Capitalism and the complete control of all industry on a co-operative basis.

To apply the principle of co-operative control, as distinct from Government control, necessitates the acceptance of the full responsibility of management and administration by the workers themselves, and of course it means all workers, mental as well as manual, and trained experts to the fullest extent for every department—but control by the workers themselves functioning through their *local district and national councils*.

### *What Parliament can't do*

This view is not compatible with reliance upon Parliament to undertake the responsibility of organising industry, and as we do not look to Parliament to organise or control industry, we have little use for Parliament in our work of achieving economic emancipation, which of course is the workers' objective.

I am quite alive to the fact that Parliament not only exists, but functions most effectively *for the Capitalists*. I am also aware that unless the workers have the disposition and capacity to exhibit class solidarity, Parliament can and will take action that will impede and stultify the efforts of the workers on the industrial field. This I frankly admit is of so serious a nature, that it puts one in an utterly illogical position when one is compelled to admit that there is no immediate prospect of such working class solidarity over the entire industrial field as would be equal to the hostile forces of Capitalism.

I am not one who takes up the position of waiting indefinitely for the perfecting of industrial organisation, fired with the right revolutionary enthusiasm ; I entirely agree that—to put the matter concretely—Unemployment must not be allowed to continue—not merely for a generation, but not a year, not a month. I hold it should be faced *now*, dealt with *now* by the most effective methods that every section of the working class is able to take.

### *The Army*

One does not require to be told what the capitalists would do with the fighting forces, if the workers show fighting efficiency on the industrial field, but only on sectional lines. The behaviour of the Government and the Plutocracy generally in the early months of 1921, when the miners looked like getting the backing of other organised workers shows this. Let none forget how Hyde Park was taken over by the authorities, the reserves called up, the parks filled with military and military equipment. Actual war would have commenced, machine guns, and bombing aeroplanes were all included, and the military and equipment were placed throughout the country, in the Welsh Valleys and on the mountain sides, and throughout the whole coalfield area of Britain.

If I could urge action to meet this I certainly would, and not touch Parliament, but I agree it can only be done by taking action on the political field, and returning class conscious workers for the respective electorates to fill the positions that would otherwise be filled by Workers' enemies, and being there, to show their fighting ability by opposing every hostile action on the part of the Boss class to the Working class. Admitting all this, this only carries one along political or parliamentary lines to take action to check and destroy the governmental machinations of the capitalists, and it tells the workers still, that they themselves must organise more than ever industrially, and link every industry up over the whole country, and resort to the control of industry in the common interest as speedily as may be, operating through workshop committees and workers' councils.

### *Pass a Six-Hour Day Law*

The first step should be to deal with Unemployment, and here I am willing to run the risk of wholesale criticism or condemnation. I declare that *the* method, of far greater importance than any other, effective in operation, sound in economics, is that of reducing the hours of labour of those in work ; and therefore for those in Parliament and for all workers everywhere I assert that the *six-hour working day* applied to all industries, would temporarily solve Unemployment, would give an enormous stimulus to industry, would wipe out the

dismal conditions now prevailing, would immediately give consuming capacity and purchasing capacity, resulting in ever increasing productive capacity, and I hold this should be the first work in Parliament and out, to proceed to establish the Six-Hour Day.

On the industrial field, the workers should be encouraged by every Labour member to take steps to secure this, and the militant workers' members in Parliament should prevent any Governmental action against them, should give every facility and encouragement to the workers to proceed, and should refuse to sanction any contract on behalf of the State that did not contain the six-hour conditions. The same should be applied to all contracts for municipalities and public bodies of all kinds ; equally where contracts have already been made.

To continue to give illustrations or to deal with other phases would take me beyond what I set out to write, so I leave the matter here, stating, " I support Parliamentary action to the extent of resorting to political as well as other action to overthrow Capitalism, and particularly at this hour to prevent capitalists from frustrating our efforts industrially."

So I rejoice at the fact that so considerable a contingent of Labour members have been returned, and hope to find them engaged in persistent and successful battles against the Boss class.

TOM MANN.

### BUILD HOUSES, SAYS GEORGE HICKS

**W**HEN a Labour Government comes into power, Housing is bound to receive early attention for many good reasons. Of these the most important are (1) the fact that since 1919, when local authorities were called upon to survey their areas and bring forward a statement of requirements, no attempt has been made to overtake the capital shortage and little done to keep up even with the current demand for houses ; (2) the usefulness of an adequate housing scheme in providing work for large numbers of unemployed ; and (3) the serious results of over-crowding upon the health and industrial efficiency of the nation.

The minimum required is 200,000 houses a year and this production must be kept up for at least twenty-five years before we can be said to be within sight of a solution of the problem. To enable this to be done *sources of material supply that have dropped out of commission must be recovered and new avenues developed.* The foreign policy of a Labour Government would assist the stabilisation of certain materials by opening up trade with Russia.

Guarantees that must be honoured by any successive Governments on the same principle as debts and financial commitments, will have

to be given against cancelling housing plans and these will not only make for economy in production and help to eliminate speculative disturbance of the market, but also improve the prospects of the workers and encourage normal entrants into the industry. If legislation similar to the Housing ("Miscellaneous Provisions") Bill which the House of Lords threw out was passed for the purpose of concentrating at least fifty per cent. of building labour on working-class housing, this work could be got on with at once without panic methods of dilution, and adequate training provided for those new entrants to the number ascertained as requisite.

As the nation is paying in unemployment allowances and relief to building operatives out of work some millions a year it could afford, if necessary, to stand a considerable loss on the scheme, but with proper co-ordination and, as far as possible, mass production from the brickfield to the estate, it ought to be practical to build houses to let at little, if any, more than what are called "economic rents." This with proper conditions and guarantees to the workers.

The people want houses. As the people make everything they are entitled to houses, and good ones. If they can't pay an economic rent obviously they don't get an economic wage. The country can afford houses and, indeed, cannot afford *not* to have them! Let a Labour Government build houses when it comes into power—*which is not necessarily the same thing as coming into office.*

GEORGE HICKS.

## The DECADENCE of a GREAT CRAFT UNION

FROM 1852 to 1897 the Amalgamated Society of Engineers was regarded as the model union throughout the trade union world. Formed largely through the organising genius of Allan and Newton, it commenced as an amalgamation of several small societies in the engineering trade, and became the first successful attempt to found a really powerful organisation after the long period of trade union stagnation following upon the great debacle of 1834. Robert Owen's Grand National Consolidated, and the great Builders' Union, both of revolutionary aims, had been launched and destroyed in combat with the employers of that period. Hence we can understand the respect trade unionists in the 'fifties felt towards the new union, which early demonstrated its power to stand up to the employers with some real measure of success.

Mention may be made of some of its exploits up to the year 1897. Its readiness to help other workers was shown in the great strike of

the London building workers in 1859, when it contributed £1,000 a week for three consecutive weeks to the strike fund, and by this hitherto unprecedented display of comradeship helped materially to bring the strike to a satisfactory conclusion. In 1871 it initiated the Nine-Hours movement, and forced the employers to concede this valuable reform afterwards extended to most of the staple trades throughout the country. It was one of the few unions which successfully weathered the terrible trade depression of 1879, and onwards to 1897 it considerably improved the wages and consolidated the power of its members throughout the industry.

In 1897 it launched its attack upon the employers for the Eight-Hour day, and after a desperately fought struggle extending over a period of seven months, met with its first great defeat in the historic lock-out instituted by the newly federated employers. Three years later it was stronger in funds and membership than before, though it must be admitted that to a great extent it had lost its courage to offer battle to its conquerors of '97 who had imposed extremely humiliating terms of surrender upon the proud old Union.

After a period of sullen acquiescence, the spirit of revolt again began to surge, and upon the eve of the late war was at the point of flaming up for another and much greater attempt to smash the hated "Terms of Settlement," disguised by this time under the euphemism of "Terms of Agreement"; a tactical change designed to soften the bitter memories of the great defeat sixteen years before. My recollections of this period impel me to remind Plebeians that in these days conditions in the engineering shops were by no means so congenial or established as they are to-day. Men could not obtain the trade union rates of wages as easily as they do now. It was a common occurrence to see them come to the branches and claim their donation through being compelled to throw up jobs because firms refused to pay the prescribed wages. It is no exaggeration to say that "district rates" were only established by countless battles conducted at great cost. There was also a uniform disregard of the comfort of workmen. Shops were rarely warmed in winter, wash-bowls, canteens, ambulances, welfare schemes were unknown, as also were employment departments, with their modernised systems of inquisition.

After '98, largely by the influence of George Barnes, general secretary from '96 to 1908, belief in strikes had given place to hopes in Parliamentary representation. It was realised that the employers were too powerful to be fought successfully by strikes alone, and the Barnes propaganda obtained a very large following. Tom Mann's syndicalist propaganda, launched in 1910 and conducted with characteristic virility, weakened belief in the Barnes tradition, but never effectually destroyed it, and in consequence the mentality of the membership remained confused and aimless.

By this time "collective bargaining" had been long established as the official policy of the Union. Started as a propaganda by Allan before the Trade Union Commission of 1867, it had developed into a custom by 1892, when the first salaried Executive Council was instituted. Under professional guidance it became a highly technical business and for some years has been an obsession, so all absorbent of official energy and imagination as to cause every other tactic to become subordinated to it.

During the war many concessions were obviously easy to secure from the Government and the employers by means of collective bargaining, or negotiation as it is termed to-day. The enormous development in munition factories caused thousands of "dilutees" to flock into the Union, afterwards to become a great embarrassment, if not a nuisance.

By July, 1920, the A.S.E. became the Amalgamated Engineering Union with a membership of 450,000, and three and a half millions in funds. The members became imbued with great hopes of the bigger machine, but it, despite its formidable potentialities as a fighting organisation, continued the A.S.E. policy of negotiation. So much was this so, that, though the Union leaders were threatened by the employers with a lock-out at least twelve months before it was actually put into effect, they were quite incapable of extricating themselves from the torpor of inaction brought upon them by the force of the long established habit of "negotiating" any trouble that occurred.

The inevitable result followed, despite the heroic resistance of a loyal rank and file who displayed a fighting capacity and power of endurance equal to the best their forbears had ever displayed. During the thirteen weeks' struggle the officials relied entirely upon the hope of settling the dispute by negotiation, and ultimately arranged the terms of the second and much more calamitous surrender than that of a quarter-century before.

Since the lock-out of 1922, the Union has rapidly declined in membership, funds, and influence. It has lost 160,000 members in three years; its funds have dropped by millions. The following figures significantly indicate the state of impotence to which the Union has sunk. Since the lock-out, 147 questions in dispute have been negotiated at the monthly conferences held at York between the two parties. Of these, sixty-eight were refused by the employers, fifty-three were either adjourned or referred back to the districts for further consideration, sixteen were dropped by the Union, and only ten concessions were granted. Of forty applications for wage advances ONE was granted, thirty-one refused at once and the remainder adjourned, presumably for later rejection. In spite of the lessons

these melancholy results should convey, negotiation continues to be the official policy of the Union.

It may well be asked why do the members persist in this unfruitful policy?

There are several answers to this question. There is the fact that like other unions the A.E.U. is organised for negotiation and not for waging strikes. Next, the industry has suffered from phenomenal unemployment, and in consequence, the employers have enforced enormous wage reductions with the effect of driving thousands of workers abroad, chiefly to the U.S.A. The average rate of the skilled engineering worker to-day is as low as 5s. 6d. for a week of forty-seven hours, and it can be inferred that no self-respecting mechanic will work very long for this disgraceful wage, hence the movement abroad in search of a better standard of living. Discontent with the governing body of the Union is another factor contributing to its decline though it must be granted in fairness, that circumstances have been unfavourable to the adoption of a militant policy.

The bulk of the membership is apathetic and disinclined to energetic action, and it is here that I.W.C.E. classes should play a part.

One encouraging fact is the existence of a larger body of active, well-informed members than is to be found in any other union. This element only awaits opportunities to secure the adoption of a militant policy which in the writer's opinion should take the practical form of endeavouring to bring about a fighting combination with the miners, railway, and transport men. All these are in the same parlous plight as the A.E.U., with wages down, conditions becoming worse, tyranny rampant, and no hope of anything better while each union acts alone. How long is it to be before they act and organise together to fight the common enemy?

J. D. LAWRENCE.

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## The NATIONAL COUNCIL of LABOUR COLLEGES

Every working-class organisation should provide its members with facilities for *independent* working-class education. Get *your* organisation to arrange an educational scheme in conjunction with the N.C.L.C.

*Write* SEC., 22 ELM ROW, EDINBURGH

## JOHN McLEAN

JOHN McLEAN died on November 30th, 1923, after a short illness, of double pneumonia. He was known to the Labour and Socialist Movement throughout Britain, and by repute on the Continent. A school-teacher by profession, a man of letters, he threw himself wholeheartedly into the work of the Socialist movement, resigning from school-teaching in 1915. Originally a member of the S.D.F., then of the British Socialist Party, subsequently of the Communist Party (being at one time British Consul for Soviet Russia), he latterly founded an organisation known as the Scottish Workers Republican Party.

He suffered three terms of imprisonment. In the second case, although he was released before the expiry of his sentence, the mental torture which is a part of present day penal methods left its mark on his keen, analytical mind. On his release he carried on his work with renewed vigour, recharged with fresh enthusiasm. His whole energy, physical and mental, was applied to the great task.

But it is in connection with the Labour College movement that he will be most remembered. He was instrumental in forming the Scottish Labour College, and later became a full-time tutor under its auspices. He conducted classes with the same virility as in his general socialist propaganda, with the added asset of his knowledge of teaching. Under his sway the College prospered, and the Marxian doctrine was introduced to many who have since shown that McLean's teaching has borne good fruit.

Numerous classes were conducted by him, his prodigious energy knowing no bounds. As a teacher he was unexcelled. His supreme aim in life was to create class-conscious fighters imbued with the spirit of the fight. I remember him declaring during the year when he was subjected to the consistent attention of the authorities that their vigilance was due to the fear of him as a teacher of the Labour College, and because of his class-room work. At that period he had an attendance of about 400 students at one of his classes.

There is no doubt that Comrade McLean has died, in the hey-day of life, as a result of his activities on behalf of the working class. In season and out of season he continued his work of educating, assisting and directing the workers towards social emancipation. Honest and sincere beyond reproach he was a rebel of the highest order. The movement has lost a great fighter. Let us continue the work of proletarian education with the courage and fidelity displayed by Comrade John McLean.

SYDNEY WALKER.

# A FABIAN judged by HISTORY

*This short article is by the author of "How Labour Governs," the Study of Australian Labour politics reviewed in The PLEBS two or three months ago.*

**I**N 1902 the Hon. W. Pember Reeves did good service to the Labour Movement here by giving a well-written and fair account of the sort of Fabian legislation inspired by the Labour movements in the Australian colonies and New Zealand, combined with a study of its results up to that date. His work undoubtedly possessed much of permanent value, but a verbatim reproduction of his twenty-year-old book—by a patent process in Saxony—seems hardly called for\*. The epoch treated by Mr. Pember Reeves has in the interval been discussed with greater accuracy, richer documentation and deeper insight by Sir Timothy Coghlan, not to mention a host of cheaper and less verbose volumes. The use of the present tense in 1923 for the description of topographical and social conditions which were fast disappearing in 1902 is actually misleading.

In reading our author's delightfully written introductory account of Australia, a native of that Dominion is at once struck by the extraordinary changes that exploration, irrigation, and the expansion of agricultural settlement have wrought in the economic geography of the continent. Equally startling is the transformation that has come over the face of politics with the advance of the Labour Party. Andrew Fisher, E. G. Theodore, and others, have given the lie to the statement that Labour leaders, recruited from the unionist ranks, seldom show "shining talent or exceptional force."

But, for a critique on the judgments of a kindly Fabian faced after twenty years with the verdict of history, this book forms a treasure house of material invaluable to the student. The story of the Labour Party in Queensland is described as "picturesque" but "pathetic," because it failed to extort between 1891 and 1901 the grudging modicum of betterment legislation that its more opportunist brother party in New South Wales had received by bargaining. Yet, while the latter, despite repeated purgations, is still rendered impotent through the corruption and consequent internal strife which is the legacy of that epoch, the Queensland Labour Party, as a result of its more uncompromising policy in the past, gave birth

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\* *State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand.* By the Hon. W. Pember Reeves. (New Impression, 2 vols., 21s. Allen & Unwin).

RY at length to a real Labour Government. The latter did more in a single year to improve the real status of the workers than thirty years of political diplomacy had achieved in other States and in New Zealand; and, surviving four general elections, it has established a record in longevity for the Pacific!

On the other hand the alliance in New Zealand between unionism and Liberalism which placed our author in office, is held up as the dawn of a new era. But its most prominent result was the creation—in the teeth, it is true, of bitter hostility from the great landowners and the merchant princes—of a numerous class of ultra-conservative small landowners and “cockroach” capitalists. In reliance on their votes the reactionary Massey Government has been able to rule the proletariat on approved American lines, with armed Pinkertons, ruthless conscription, and a censorship that excludes not only The PLEBS but even Brieux from the Dominion. In the hands of this class Pember Reeves’ crowning achievement, compulsory arbitration, has become a weapon for lending to yellow unions the backing of the State, as in the Waihi strike and the general strike of 1915. To-day the genuine unions, almost shattered by the instrument so thoughtfully devised for their moral elevation, have had to begin to build up a radical, almost Bolshevik, Labour Party whose leaders and sentiments would gravely offend the taste of gentlemanly Fabians.

And what of the high hopes entertained twenty years ago of Compulsory Arbitration? The forecasts have been fulfilled—partially and with reservations. The system has indeed won acceptance from the mass of the workers—but only as a safeguard against bad times; and by most employers—but only as a screen against strikes during boom years. It has—alas—often been proved that the Arbitration Court can “coerce” a striking union, but not that “it can force an employer to carry on business if he refuses to do so.” If a profit cannot be made under the terms of an Award, the employer shuts down his works, as the Broken Hill mine-owners did in 1921; and of course such inaction is not a “lock-out” against which the Court can intervene!

This book gives us an account of the work of the system (interrupted by the fact that the patent process has failed to reproduce six whole pages of Volume II!) during a period of rising markets. The author was conscious of the synchronism; yet he never paused to ask whether the real benefits conferred on the workers under Awards of the Court were anything but the reflex of the enhanced bargaining power given them by the trade revival. That it should seem profitable to reproduce such a work to-day is the best commentary on the value of the Fabians to the British Labour Movement.

V. G. CHILDE.

# The CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT Past, Present, and Future

*The following Syllabus will be found exceedingly valuable, either as a guide to the individual student, or as an outline course of lectures for classes. The educational scheme of the N.U. of Distributive and Allied Workers, a large proportion of whose members are Co-operative employees, offers a good opportunity for making use of the subject-matter here outlined.*

## **Foreword**

**T**HE Co-operative Movement has been too much ignored by left-wing members of the Labour Movement. This attitude is no longer tenable. The importance of the Co-operative Movement on its trading and productive sides necessitates an intelligent appreciation of its history, growth, possibilities and limitations. Its status in Russia and its relation to a Workers' State ; the development of trading between the Soviet Government, Arcos Limited, Centrosoyus, and the C.W.S. all emphasise the necessity for a study of the movement in its national and international aspects.

All the Co-operative histories treat the subject from the view-point of the consumer, hence a need for dealing with the subject from a different standpoint.

## **I.—Introduction and Definitions**

Two ideas embraced in co-operation :—(a) Co-operation in Consumption (the distributive side) ; (b) Co-operation in Production. In (a) the endeavour is to supplant the middleman, the proprietors of the stores being its customers. This kind of co-operation has met with considerable success. In (b) the aim is for the workers to supplant the employer, by means of their own or borrowed capital. Profits of the concern, otherwise appropriated by the employer, go to swell the wages of the workers, in the shape of bonuses, etc. This kind of co-operation has been in nearly all instances a failure.

We must carefully distinguish the C.W.S., or Local Distributive Societies' productive side, from co-operation in production proper. The workers in the C.W.S. factories, etc., have a similar status to those employed by capitalist concerns, neither owning nor controlling the factories.

ORIGIN: "The words Co-operation and Co-operative have been used by communist writers to denote that all the members of a community are at work together for the common benefit, instead of working, as at present, each on his own account." (C. Morrison, *Capital and Labour*).

In this lecture a brief digest of the many Utopias and Utopists from More's *Utopia* to Owen's *New Moral World* will be a useful introduction, as these Utopias inspired many co-operative experiments. Noting that "the Utopian is one who starting from an abstract principle seeks for a perfect social organisation," and that none of the Utopians recognised the CLASS STRUGGLE in which the workers were the banner-bearers of progress.

## II.—Social Conditions in Pre-Co-operative Days

We must commence with a brief historical summary of the Industrial Revolution, as the Co-operative Movement is a direct consequence of the change brought about in social relations, being one of the measures adopted to mitigate the misery of the masses.

Two social conditions essential for capitalist production: (1) A propertyless proletariat. (2) Accumulation of capital in hands of a few individuals. But, "Labour made capital before capital employed labour!"

We can summarise the immediate consequences of the Industrial Revolution as (1) Breakup of the old methods of production; (2) Final divorcement of the workers from the means of production; (3) Growth of the power of the capitalist class; (4) Great increase and re-distribution of the population; (5) Development of the modern working class; (6) Development of Trade Unionism: Co-operative experiments; Chartism; and revolt generally against inhuman conditions.

## III.—Early Efforts

The Co-operative Movement originally applied itself to the first necessities of flour-milling and bread-making. The Hull Anti-Mill Society was founded in 1795 by certain "poor inhabitants" to preserve themselves "from the invasions of covetous and merciless men." It was a striking success. Robert Owen's propaganda later resulted in "Two separate and important branches of social reform. The socialistic legislation of the last fifty years on the one hand, and the co-operative movement on the other sprang out of the teaching of Robert Owen." (B. Potter, *Co-operative Movement in Great Britain*.) Owen started the *Economist* in 1821, and in the same year "The Co-operative and Economical Society" was formed in London. The London Co-operative Society was commenced in 1824, and by 1832 there were some 500 Co-operative Societies in existence. These all failed. The early societies were succeeded by Annual Congresses, propaganda, and the actual setting up of Communistic Colonies. These also failed, though the Ralahine

experiment was significant of great possibilities. *The Co-operator*, published by Dr. King, 1828-30, expounds a practical constructive policy. Other thinkers, as Thompson, anticipated Marx in turning the arguments of Ricardo from a defence into an indictment of capitalism. The decline of the early co-operative movement coincided with the growth of militant Trade Unionism and Chartism which offered more immediate benefits to the down-trodden workers. But these early co-operative experiments were significant of the first trial of strength in this form of association.

#### IV.—*The Rochdale Pioneers and their System*

Revolutionary Trade Unionism and Chartism collapsed. Why? The early T.U. Movement failed mainly because *economic* conditions bred intense competition amongst the workers. Chartism mainly failed because it had no organised *industrial* strength of the workers to support it.

The seed of the pioneers eventually took root and bore fruit, for the Rochdale Pioneers store in 1844 was the precursor of movements destined to have a great effect on the working class, not only in this country, but also on the continent, where it was later adopted and applied in some cases with greater success. It was the idea of Howarth (one of the twenty-eight founders) and its application, "*that the profits made by sales should be divided among all members who made purchases in proportion to the amount they spent,*" that made possible the growth of the movement. Their programme was aimed at leading up to "a self-supporting home colony of united interests." The success of the T.U. and Co-operative Movements after 1850 was due mainly to the enormous economic development, which, aided by improved means of transport, opened out the interiors of the vast continental markets. Hence increased demand for *Labour Power* to produce commodities; hence decreased competition amongst workers, allowing them to organise more effectively.

Dives could afford a few more crumbs for Lazarus!

#### V.—*Early Struggles*

The Co-operative Movement early had to encounter the hostility of shopkeepers. Lack of education and unbusiness-like methods further retarded development. But the most serious obstacle was the law. Before 1852 the legal disabilities were: (a) every Co-op. Society was considered a private partnership, and every member was responsible for the total liabilities of the Society; (b) if it had more than twenty-five members it had no legal existence at all, hence (c) it had no means of defence against embezzlement or robbery, and no power to enforce rules. The great service of the Christian Socialists was in getting Parliament to grant legal recognition. The

Industrial and Provident Societies Act of 1852 gave to Workers' Co-op. Societies legal sanction, protection against dishonest officials, and power to enforce rules. An Act, however, of 1855 made expenditure on education out of society funds illegal. Right away the Rochdale Pioneers had devoted 2½ per cent. of their net profits for educational purposes, and this prohibition gave a check to educational work. It was removed by the Act of 1862, which also limited the liability of members of a Co-op. Society to the amount of shares held. But the mischief had been done, and as regards education "societies got out of the way of thinking it an essential matter."

The personalities and propaganda of the Christian Socialists should be studied, and the attempts to harmonise Christianity and Socialism.

### VI.—*Origins and Growth of the C.W.S.*

The Distributive Store Movement steadily expanded from 1844-64. This with difficulties created by private wholesalers and the desire for unadulterated foods led to the need for a wholesale agency. First attempts—including that by the Rochdale Society—met with failure. The federal form, which alone could be successful, had to await the sanction of the law, and this was obtained in 1862. In 1863 the North of England Co-operative Wholesale Industrial and Provident Society was formed (this became the C.W.S. in 1873), and in 1868 the Scottish C.W.S. was founded.

As capital and members increased, inevitably the Wholesale Societies were driven into production (1873) and banking (1876), but not until further legal obstacles had been removed. Up to 1867, Co-op. Societies found themselves fettered by the fact that members' individual investments were limited to £100; up to 1871 Societies were debarred from holding and dealing freely in land; and until 1876 Co-operative banking was blocked by the law.

The share capital of the Wholesales is raised by the Distributive Societies federated in those bodies, and Societies trading with them receive a dividend on the amounts purchased. The S.C.W.S. admits employees to membership. The Share and Loan Capitals of the Wholesales amounted to £31,951,612 in 1922, and the Trade to £83,600,559.

Has the private member of a Distributive Society any more direct responsibility in the conduct of the C.W.S. than he has, say, in the control of the State? As a matter of fact democratic control of the Wholesales is a mere name.

### VII.—*Progress and Poverty—in Ideals*

The first National Co-operative Congress was held in London, 1869, and was responsible for the creation of the Central Board,

from which twenty years later sprang the Co-operative Union. The Union is a propagandist federation of the majority of Co-operative Societies in Great Britain. It looks after the legal interests of the movement, and conducts the educational side by means of literature, lectures, classes, summer schools, etc., and is advocating and organising the formation of a Co-operative College. Once a year it organises a National Co-operative Congress and Exhibition of productions. This functions in a similar way to the Trades Union Congress. Many resolutions of a progressive character await fulfilment in the far-away future, or else are quietly buried.

Material progress has handicapped education. As long ago as 1883 the *Wholesale Almanack* stated :—

“ We regret to find that educational grants do not keep pace with the general growth of societies. Necessity led many of the old co-operators to study co-operation ; but the growth of profits which has resulted from that study appears to make many young ones care less than the old ones. Now, unless the young ones are taught what co-operation means, and what it is calculated to do, how are we to prepare our future directors, managers and other officers ? Our opinion is that *it will pay every society* to devote at least 2½ per cent. of its net profits to education, and that, though societies may and do succeed without this, yet it is because the older generation still lives and guides them.”

Toynbee and Stuart uttered similar warnings. To counteract this ignoring of the original aims and ideals the Women's Co-operative Guild mainly came to be founded (1883). This has been a valuable training ground for women taking an active part in progressive movements, and it has conducted an active agitation in the Co-operative Movement, particularly in favour of the Co-operative minimum wage. 1871 saw the birth of the *Co-operative News*, and the publishing side has steadily developed since then. During these years an acute controversy raged between the advocates of federal co-operation, the “ federalists ” and the champions of production by the workers, the “ individualists.” The trend of events settled the argument, not the merits of the case.

### VIII.—*Co-operative Production and Co-Partnership*

The *Society for Promoting Working Men's Associations* was founded in 1849 and its aim was thus described :—

Theoretically, the idea we endeavoured to spread was the conception of workers as brethren—of work as coming from a brotherhood of men associated for their common benefit—who therefore rejected any notion of competition with each other as inconsistent with the true form of society and, without formally preaching communism, sought to form industrial establishments communistic in feeling, of which it should be the aim, while paying ordinary wages and interests at the rate I have mentioned (4 per cent.) to apply the profits of the business in ways conducive to the common advantage of the body whose work produced them. (V. Neale.)

All sorts of self-governing workshops came into existence, only in the majority of cases to die a speedy death. The possibilities of success are only to be found in those industries which can be carried on by a few workers in which the initial expenditure in tools and raw materials is small, and the manufactured articles mainly produced for local markets. The development of Trusts and Combines makes these conditions practically impossible of fulfilment. In 1883 the *Labour Association for the Promotion of Co-operative Production* was established, based on the theory of the co-partnership of the worker, now called the *Labour Co-partnership Association*. This is a propagandist body. A productive co-operative concern where interest is paid on capital is now generally termed a "co-partnership." These bodies can affiliate to the Co-operative Union. Of course, many limited liability companies have what they term co-partnership schemes, where a bonus on wages is paid, or shares are allotted to workers employed. These are outside the Co-operative Movement.

Arguments against co-partnership do not apply to the Societies of co-operative production, or self-governing workshops. But there are equally cogent arguments to the detriment of the latter. The idea of crippling capitalism by these methods is no nearer realisation than when first formulated. Consideration should be given to types of co-partnership, and advantages claimed should be critically examined.

I can understand why some captains of industry have adopted the system. If I were an employer I should want labour to be pliable, diligent, economical. I should utilise the principle of co-partnership as a means of inducing the workers to sweat themselves and reducing the cost of superintendence. My reasoning would run: "I am making £5,000 a year. If by granting 25 per cent. of the profits to the workers I can make the business yield £10,000 a year profit, that will be £2,500 for the employees and £7,500 for me. It is a sound commercial proposition. Also I shall earn a reputation as a model employer, and possibly Lloyd George will slip me an O. B. E. or even a knighthood when he decorates those who help to keep labour in subjection" (J. Penny, *Co-op. News*, 1922).

### IX.—*War and its Effects—1914 to date*

There was a steady expansion during the war, despite the Government's generally unfair treatment of the Co-op. Movement as regards food distribution, military service, and taxation. The taxation of co-operative dividends formed the subject of much discussion before the Royal Commission on Income Tax. These grievances of co-operators against the Government led to a reluctant entry into politics. Opposition was expressed by the C.W.S. and others to affiliation to the Labour Party or an alliance with that body, and the decision of the Swansea Congress (1917) resulted in the advent of the Co-operative Party. It must be admitted that the receding of the tide of indignation has largely left the Party stranded.

The increasingly bitter relations of the Stores and the C.W.S. with the employees' Union, resulted in the establishment of hours and wages boards, local and national, with the object of settling disputes.

The C.W.S. entered into a policy of land purchase which, strictly speaking, antedated the war, but war difficulties expedited the policy. Manufacturing extensions, acquisition of numerous factories, and the purchase of a coal-mine are outstanding developments.

The slump in trade and unemployment has inevitably had its effects by reducing membership and capital in the movement. Industrial disputes, as in the mining industry, 1921, have also contributed to this end. But the reduction has been surprisingly small.

There is further the decision to inaugurate a Co-operative daily newspaper. Is this a desirable or practicable proposition from the point of view of the Labour Movement as a whole?

### *X.—Co-operation and Trade Unionism*

Generally the relations between the two movements have been cordial, but the foundation of a special trade union for Co-operative Employees in 1891 was a prick to the Co-operative conscience. This union from 1895 was known as the Amalgamated Union of Co-operative Employees\*, and in 1911 formed a strike fund.

There is no striking difference between the status of the worker in co-operative employ and his fellow-workers in capitalist concerns. Indeed, the conditions generally of Co-operative employ have been rather aptly described as "not so good as the best, better than the worst, and about as good as the average."

One of the keenest debates in the movement was in connection with the proposed Minimum Wage scale. In August, 1907, the C.W.S. Committee agreed to the A.U.C.E. minimum of 24s. for men. But it was more difficult to obtain the minimum for women. The Women's Co-operative Guild urged this at their Congress in 1906, and a joint committee eventually drew up the "Congress scale" in 1908. But it was not until 1914 that the C.W.S. put the scale in force.

Another keenly debated question was and is, that of employees and their right to representation on Boards of Management. Many years ago the Rochdale Society had the following clause inserted in their registered rules: "No servant of this society shall serve any office in the committee of management, nor be allowed to vote for any candidate for the committee of management, nor be an auditor on any account whatsoever." This disqualification became general,

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\* By amalgamation with the Warehouse and General Workers' Union now known as the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers.

but nowadays the employees, as members of a society, are not usually disfranchised. And a number of societies now allow employees to be elected on Boards of Management.

The question of compulsory Trade Unionism has also agitated the movement, particularly the C.W.S. Quite recently the C.W.S. was instructed by its delegate meetings to compel all employees to become trade unionists. Several delegates since then have complained of the non-enforcement of this resolution. At the October, 1923, quarterly meeting, the chairman stated that it was impossible to enforce it. 3,000 employees "objected to being dragooned into a Trade Union." Further, his view was that, whereas the Co-operative Movement was constructive in its methods, Trade Unionism was essentially destructive. In view of the proposals to rescind the compulsory resolution this discussion is of decided interest.

"The co-operators of 1860 upheld co-operation as superior to trade unionism altogether. In the co-operative era strikes and lock-outs and unions of labour against capital were to be weapons of the past."

But, the conditions dictated by the general economic organisation of capitalist society decide otherwise, and the recent dispute and strike of the N.U.D.A.W. and Shop Assistants' Union with the C.W.S. (May 13th to June 28th, 1923) is a striking case in point. The matters in dispute were finally arbitrated upon by the Joint Committee of the T.U.C. and the Co-operative Union, and the result, according to the N.U.D.A.W., was that "the award gives the C.W.S. everything it asked for . . . (and) no woman employed at Pelaw or Silvertown will receive more than 27s. 3d. per week." Further, the Union believes that "this award, which gives, against the weight of evidence, lower rates of wages than are being paid by any decent firm in the country, will convince its members that it is no use looking for justice from the Joint Committee."

However, the whole dispute has not been without its results on Co-operative opinion, as the Central Board of the Co-operative Union passed the following resolution on September 22nd, 1923 :

That the time has arrived when the Co-operative Movement should seriously consider the question of how far the worker should have control of industry and what share should be given to the management? And that the matter be referred to the United Board for consideration and report.

### *XI.—International Co-operation*

Co-operation has not developed on exactly similar lines abroad as in Britain. There are three general classes of Co-operative Association :—

(1) *Societies of Consumption*, where Britain stands at the head.

- (2) *Societies of Production*, where France is pre-eminent.  
 (3) *Societies of Credit or Banking*, which have been developed most successfully in Germany.

The most prominent fact abroad has been the tremendous growth of agricultural co-operation, notably in Denmark. We must note that this form is supplementary to individual cultivation, and seeks chiefly to give the farmer a better profit. Also it tends to give the peasant proprietor some of the advantages of large-scale production.

Irish co-operation is mainly agricultural and has shown a steady advance, to receive a temporary set-back by the British Government's Terrorist tactics by the "black and tans," and the subsequent Civil War. There is generally a closer co-ordination on the continent between the three sections of the Labour Movement (Industrial, Political, and Co-operative), than is the case in Britain. Especially is this so in Belgium.

The *International Co-operative Alliance* works for intercourse between co-operators in different countries, and for knowledge of their movements, but, like the educational side of the movement, the preponderating Distributive Stores' influence is a retarding one.

The C.W.S. has done a considerable amount of international trading and transactions in pre-war days, and an interesting possibility is that of an International C.W.S.

Certain problems of international co-operation require thrashing out, such as the relation between Consumers' Co-operation and Agricultural Co-operation, and the question of native races and their treatment. The relation of the Co-operative Movement to the various States, as Russia, Georgia, Italy, Austria, France, etc., should be studied. A recent development of interest is that of the formation of the *Anglo-Russian Wheat Exporting Company*, composed on the Russian side of the Soviet Government, Arcos Limited, and Centrosoyus, and on the English side of the C.W.S. and two independent brokers.

In the important question of restoration of trade with Europe, is the suggestion, by many Co-operators, of *barter* as a method, a practicable one?

## XII.—*Summary of Pros and Cons of the Movement*

On the one hand we have the claim that "Co-operation, in the social sense of the word, is a new power of industry, constituted by the equitable combination of the worker, capitalist, and consumer, and a new means of commercial morality, by which honesty is rendered re-productive" (Holyoake); and on the other the extreme view

that "As we are organised to abolish wage-slavery, we are opposed to the Co-operative Movement" (*Socialist Standard*).

The Co-operative Movement has been the means of giving workers more self-reliance and a knowledge of business and trading. We must understand the workings of capitalism before we can lay the foundations truly for a new social order. The movement should be the natural ally of trade unionism, and it has undoubtedly given assistance of great value in numbers of strikes and lock-outs, as in Dublin in 1913. This presupposes, however, a better support of the Movement by trade unionists. Of the many millions of money received yearly in wages by the workers, only  $\frac{2}{3}$ d. in the £ finds its way over Co-operative counters. In a transitional stage between Capitalism and Communism, the Co-operative Movement provides the organisation and machinery for the distribution of food and other necessities.

Can the Co-operative Movement in itself achieve the Co-operative Commonwealth? The answer lies in a comparison of the capital represented by the Federation of British Industries and that of the Co-operative Movement as a whole, and of the acreage of cultivable land in private ownership as compared with the small amount owned by the movement. Capital accumulates in private hands at a very much greater rate. Of £16,000,000,000, the capitalised wealth of the country, no less than £13,000,000,000 is owned by fewer than 250,000 people. The C.W.S. is more an agent than a producer, acts as distributing agent for capitalist enterprise and is mainly dependent on private sources for raw materials. Co-operation rests on the insecure foundation of dividend; dividends must be paid whether they can be legitimately obtained or not.

The educational side of the movement fails, because the enormous majority of Co-operators, so called, haven't the slightest conception of co-operative principles.

Further, Co-operation has no control over general economic conditions. Within the movement to-day the controversy is mainly between "Voluntaryists" and "Collectivists." Where should the line be drawn between Co-operative enterprise and State and Municipal services? In the probable extension of State and Municipal activities, such as Municipal Banking, what will be the effect on voluntary co-operation?

Nevertheless the Co-operative Movement plays a great part in the forward march of the workers, and we should strive for a unified movement, Industrial, Political, and Co-operative, each providing its quota to a common purpose—the emancipation of the working class.

The following criticism by Marx sums up adequately our point

of view, noting, of course, that he is referring here specifically to Productive Co-operation :—

The co-operative factories of the labourers themselves represent within the old form the first beginnings of the new, although they naturally reproduce, and must reproduce, everywhere in their actual organisation all the shortcomings of the prevailing system. . . . They show the way, in which the mode of production may naturally grow out of an old one, when the development of the material forces of production and of the corresponding forms of social production has reached a certain stage. Without the factory system arising out of the capitalist mode of production the co-operative factory could not develop, nor without the credit system arising out of the same mode of production. . . . The capitalist stock companies as well as the co-operative factories may be considered as forms of transition from the capitalist mode of production to the associated one, with this distinction, that the antagonism is met negatively in the one, positively in the other.

J. HAMILTON.

## READING

### GENERAL.

- Industrial Co-operation.* C. Webb (5s. 9d.).\*  
*The Story Retold.* J. P. Madams (2s. 9d.).\*  
*Working Men Co-operators.* Ackland & Jones (2s. 9d.).\*  
*History of Co-operation.* Holyoake (for R. Owen and his propaganda).

### SECTION II

- The Industrial Revolution.* Beard (2s. 6d.).  
*The Village Labourer and Town Labourer.* Hammond.  
*History of Trade Unionism.* Webb (early chapters).

### SECTION III

- The Irish Land and Labour Question.* Craig (1s. 3d.).\*  
*Dr. William King and "The Co-operator."* Mercer (5s. 6d.).\*  
 For William Thompson and his theories consult *Labour in Irish History.* Connolly.

### SECTION IV

- Conditions of the Working Class, 1844.* Engels. Consult also Holyoake and C. Webb.

### SECTION V

- Co-operative Movement in Great Britain.* B. Potter. Consult also C. Webb.  
*Christian Socialism, 1848-54.* C. E. Raven.

### SECTION VI

- The Story of the C.W.S.* Redfern.  
*Wholesale Co-operation in Scotland.* Flanagan (9s. 6d.).\*

### SECTION XI

- Co-operation in Many Lands.* Smith, Gordon & O'Brien (5s. 6d.).\* See also Labour International Handbook, 1921. For other sections read current Co-operative literature Year Books; also *New Dawn* (N.U.D.A.W. Journal for employees' point of view).  
 For recent history and problems, see S. and B. Webbs' *Consumers' Co-operative Movement*.

\* Those marked \* can be obtained from the Co-operative Union, Manchester. Prices include postage.

## GERMANY TO-DAY

*This short article brings down to date the story of the development of Modern Germany told in the series which concluded in our December number. The next chapter of German history remains to be written—and the workers of Britain as well as of the Continent have to decide what that chapter shall be.*

**I**N the concluding article of our series, last month, we emphasised the importance of the large measure of conscious direction which had gone to the making of modern Germany and its capitalist Imperialism. It was her magnificent, efficiently organised resources which enabled her to resist so long the mighty forces of the Allies. But there was a fatal flaw in the German organisation. As we saw, it was a mere compromise between sections of the ruling class and the strain of a long war broke down this compromise. The Revolution of 1918 marked the final break with the feudal past; the new regime was to be a middle-class Republic. Certain crumbs of reform which were allowed to fall from the bourgeois feast gave great satisfaction to the German masses, whose aims were for the most part in no way revolutionary.

But though at that time there was nothing to fear from "the lower orders," who were in fact roused to enthusiasm by the promise of drastic reforms—especially by Erzberger's proposals for heavy direct taxation of the rich—all was not wholly well with the State. If the Junkers were at last removed from Governmental control, the fruits of their mismanagement were now maturing. In the realm of finance, their mishandling of the war-situation was particularly manifest. No attempt had been made to meet the vastly increased expenditure of war-time by direct taxation; the means adopted had been the simple but disastrous expedients of war-loans and the printing press. And the Peace Treaty aimed additional heavy blows at the very fabric of German capitalism.

The situation, rendered still more critical by the seemingly insatiable demands of the French ironmasters, necessitated a closing of the ranks of German capital. A period of rapid trustification—especially in the construction of "vertical" trusts—set in. This was the more necessary in view of the conflicts between the various sections of the German bourgeoisie—the financiers, the capitalists engaged in the extractive industries and the manufacturers. Solidarity was indispensable alike against French heavy industry and against German Labour. Even so, the results of the struggle for control in the Ruhr have been a French triumph which has imposed

on the German magnates a junior partnership in the new Franco-German iron and steel consortium ; and, following upon this agreement, a new onslaught by the combined capitalists on the last remnants of the workers' 1918 gains.

In the struggle between German and French capital, the latter was powerfully assisted by a revival of the separatist tendency in Germany. The unity forged by Bismarck and consolidated by the Imperial railway system, was not proof against the shattering blows of the past year. The old differences between North and South began to re-assert themselves. Bavaria, whose geography—and chiefly the magnificent waterway of the Danube and its tributaries—connects her rather with Austria, and whose race, religion and language are those of the south, rather than the north, was the last of the German States to join in the establishment of the Empire in 1871. And appropriately enough, it is in Bavaria that reactionary Royalism is strongest to-day. On the other hand, in Saxony and the great industrial areas generally, we see the masses moving leftward.

The heavy suffering imposed on the masses by the financial and fiscal policies of the successive bourgeois Governments ever since 1918, and the breathless rapidity of recent events in Germany have brought the class struggle to an acute stage ; nor can the opportunism of German Social Democracy serve any longer to cover the nakedness of the class issue. In spite of differences between the various reactionary elements, all are united against the masses. And the latter, in the more aggressive or despairing moods, born of the harsher conditions of the last year and of the more open hostility of the bourgeoisie, drive ever leftward, repudiating Right-Wing policies and swelling the ranks of the Communist Party. To-day the Factory Councils in all the chief industrial centres are in the control of Communists.

In our earlier articles, we saw Germany moving steadily to take possession of the pivotal position, economic and political, on the continent, until it was her development that determined its destiny. To-day, she occupies once more the centre of the stage. In Germany now, the class struggle is being waged with the fiercest intensity, naked and unashamed in the sight of all men ; and once more the fate of Europe, and of the workers of Europe, depends upon her destiny.

T. ASHCROFT.

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# A WORKER looks at IRISH HISTORY

## IV.—IRELAND IN THE XIX<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

*The three previous instalments of this series appeared in THE PLEBS for October, November and December, 1923 (7d. each postpaid).*

### *Internal Development*

IRELAND shared in the advances of the Industrial Revolution. Railways, canals and towns were developed. Unfortunately her coal was of little account. The Napoleonic Wars created high prices for foodstuffs, but as before, it was the big landlord—often an absentee—who benefited most. The peasant cultivator did not share in the prosperity. Throughout the century, as we shall see, a state of war existed. Outrage followed outrage. Whatever Britain did reacted badly for Ireland, *e.g.*, the abolition of the Corn Laws introduced American competition as another nail in the coffin of Irish agriculture.\*

The total population greatly declined after 1841. The following figures speak for themselves :

Year 1821 (First census)	6,801,827	population.
" 1841	8,000,000	"
" 1901	4,500,000	"

And the depopulation of the country districts was even greater than these figures indicate because they contain the increased population of the large towns. Certain industries developed, *e.g.*, ship building, from 1859 onwards, under the care of Harland and Woolf, in Belfast. This, with the linen manufacture, rapidly turned Belfast into the greatest town in Ireland, and accentuated the difference between the industrial north-east and the agricultural south.

### *Social Conditions*

The misery of the Irish peasant in the nineteenth century was notorious ; and the famines of 1817-18 and 1822-23, and 1846-48 excited widespread horror and sympathy. Irish workers became the cheap factory hands, the degraded migratory workers, and the

\* Further back, as Sir H. Plunkett has shown, the sudden imposition of an alien land system upon the old common fields and tillage was bitterly resented. He uses the metaphor of a piece of old tissue, not pushed off as outworn by a new growth from within, but forcibly cut away while fresh—creating not a bud, but a lasting scar. The repetition of this process, and not differences of temperament, explain the Irish "agin the government" attitude.

soldiers that Britain's rulers needed. After the famines the landlords began to evict smaller tenants. For example, the authors of *Co-operation in Ireland* state: "After 1849 and 1850, 373,000 Irish families, numbering in all two million persons, were evicted in a very short time and the Government took no steps to check the iniquity."

Wages were paid in 1819 of 2d. and 4d. a day; in 1835, of 4d., 5d. and 10d. a day. Thousands died in the recurrent famines owing to the systematic starvation which such wages implied. The Devon Commissioners (1845) record daily wages varying from 8d. to 1s. a day in 1841. Even British officials, e.g., Thomas Drummond, Under Secretary, 1835-40, protested to the landlords and asked them to remember that property had duties as well as rights, and that crime was the inevitable result of the expulsion of the cottars. But for the most part the Protestant landlords preferred to regard the agrarian crimes as Papist Plots.

Housing conditions were horrible. The Census Commissioners (1841) divided houses into four classes. The fourth and lowest class consisted of mud cabins, having only one room. In Down, the best county, 24 per cent. lived in this type; in Kerry, 66 per cent. The average for the whole of Ireland living in the fourth class was 43 per cent. of the families in rural districts, 36 per cent. in urban districts. The dwellers in these cottages lived on their potato patch supplemented by English harvest wages or occasional work in Cork, Dublin and Belfast until either they were forced to abandon the struggle, or cleared out by the landlord to become wage-workers in Britain or America.

The same commissioners showed how the soil was deteriorating and that no improvements were being introduced into agriculture; the respective yields per acre in England and Ireland being £4 7s. 6d. and £2 9s. 3d.

### *Political and Social Agitations*

Under such circumstances, it is no wonder that the traditions of the Whiteboys were revived, that the martyrs of '98 were recalled with enthusiasm and that in 1832, in spite of the severest coercion known, 9,000 crimes of violence—including 200 homicides—were reported.

The '98 movement had only been temporarily crushed. Robert Emmet and others revived it in 1803 only to fail. The subsequent agitations proposed at first much less fundamental changes than those proposed by Wolfe Tone and Emmet. Civil and political rights were finally won for the Catholics from the British parliament in 1829. The Catholic Association (1823) was largely responsible for this.

Daniel O'Connell—the great leader of the Association—was by birth a landed proprietor and deliberately switched off the agitation

from agrarian problems to agitate for the repeal of the Union. He was so successful that he came to fear the consequences of the mass feeling that he had helped to arouse, and his hesitancy encouraged the Government to arrest him.

The great demagogue was a bitter opponent of the first Trade Unions. Lord John Russell, the Liberal leader, praised him because he "never promoted recourse to physical force, nor used trades unions as a means of discord and separation among the classes." O'Connell was later displaced by the Young Ireland Movement, whose leaders included Thomas Davis, Charles Gavan Duffy, John Blake Dillon, John Mitchel and others. These were whole heartedly bent upon repeal, and hoped to unite Catholic and Protestant in their efforts.

The especially severe famine misery of 1846-48—with the suppression of their press and the transportation of Mitchel and Martin—made them think that the time had come to strike. But the rising was abortive and the leaders were imprisoned or forced to flee.

James Fintan Lalor had been the deepest thinker of this movement and he preached the right of the people to own the land. Said he: "A mightier question is the Land, one beside which Repeal dwarfs down into a petty parish question . . . The Land's the people's."

In *The Right of Ireland* he wrote :

For let no people deceive themselves, or be deceived by the words and colours, and phrases, and form of a mock freedom, by constitutions, and charters, and articles and franchises. These things are paper and parchment, waste and worthless. Let laws and institutions say what they will, this fact will be stronger than all laws, and prevail against them—the fact that those who own your lands will make your laws, and command your liberties and your lives.

This was an idea which by the exile of Irish rebels in America reappeared in the agitation of Henry George and influenced the Land League formed by Michael Davitt, in 1879.

Michael Davitt had studied Lalor's ideas while imprisoned in Dartmoor Gaol for his youthful share in the Fenian attack on Chester Castle. His Land League upheld the tenants against the landlord, and organised rent strikes and boycotts directed against all who replaced evicted rent strikers. The agitation led to the arrest of Parnell and the suppression of the League. Parnell, however, in return for release and assistance to tenants in arrears, promised to "slow down" the agitation. But the Phoenix Park assassinations of the Under and Chief Secretaries of Ireland produced a more drastic application of coercion which again was met by the outrages of the Fenian dynamitards. The Fenians exercised a great influence on both the land and parliamentary movements right down to the nineties and they reappear in the Gaelic League, Sinn Fein, the Irish Volunteers, and the fighters of Easter Week (1916).

Isaac Butt and, later, Parnell demanded Federal Home Rule within the Empire—although the latter regarded that only as a first step to complete independence. Their Home Government Associations of Ireland (1870) became the Home Rule League in 1873. The agitation succeeded in forcing from Liberal and Tory parties the Land Acts of 1870, 1881, 1891 and 1903. The Devon Commissioners had recognised that, “by age-long tradition the Irish tenant believed himself to have customary rights in the land which he rented.”

The first Land Act merely gave the tenant compensation for wrongful eviction and for improvements which he had made. The “three F’s,”—fixity of tenure, free sale and fair rent—were won in the Act of 1880, but they came too late to enable the Irish agriculturists to sell at prices determined by the corn grown on the virgin areas of the Far West. The Conservative Party encouraged peasant proprietorship by the Land Purchase Acts (1885 and 1891). The Congested Districts Board—aiming to settle the smaller peasants in less populated areas—was also set up in the latter year. This policy was followed up by Wyndham’s Land Act of 1903 (amended by a further Act in 1909) which (according to Green) bought out the Irish landlords on the security of the British Treasury, leaving the tenant to pay off the purchase money in sixty-eight and a half years by annual instalments, less in amount than his rent had been. But without organisation and scientific methods, the peasant proprietor is an economic failure.

A movement in agriculture which is more hopeful and more akin to the traditionally strong collective spirit of the Irish was led by Mr., afterwards Sir, Horace Plunkett. It tried to persuade the Irish agriculturists to work out their own salvation by co-operation expressed in co-operative creameries, co-operative credit banks, co-operative marketing and the like. Propaganda on these lines resulted in the formation of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (1894). It made considerable progress and in 1899 a State supported Agricultural Department (the I.A.O.B.) was set up.\*

To return to political events: In the House of Commons the Nationalist Party, led by Parnell, successfully organised obstruction. After the franchise reforms of 1884, eighty-six Home Rulers were returned and Mr. Gladstone introduced the first Home Rule Bill (1886). But his ensuing defeat gave coercion another chance.

As an intellectual reflex of the political and economic move for

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\* Whatever may have been the ideals of “A. E.” and Plunkett it should be remembered that Irish observers describe their pictures of co-operation in Ireland as “too highly coloured.” It has proved in many cases to be only joint stock company methods applied to farming and some of Labour’s toughest fights, according to C.O’S., have been with farmers’ co-operatives and co-operative societies.

separatism, the Gaelic League (1893) tried to preserve the Irish speech and literature. From this the whole national movement took a new turn and it is recognised by many as a great landmark in modern Irish history.

Arthur Griffith started in 1899 the *United Irishman* which stood for the abstention of Irish M.P.s from Westminster and with the Nationalists opposed the various schemes for devolution proposed to dodge the problem of Home Rule. He also, with able colleagues, planned the future structure of an independent Ireland based on the theories of List. But the completely separatist ideas of Sinn Fein (1907) won little outside publicity until after 1916, because all eyes were turned upon the likelihood of getting Home Rule from the victorious Liberals of 1906 and 1910.

### Summary

Repression following the Union, and the Emmet repercussion from '98, the struggle for Catholic emancipation leading on to the all absorbing task of winning legislative independence, clearances and evictions of the peasants, famine, and fever combining with the emigration of the "best bone and sinew" to depopulate the country, a bitterly fought war against tithes, suppressed rebellions, agrarian outrages, coercion met by assassination and dynamite, attempts made all to late to conciliate the peasant, while refusing them independence—this is a summary of a terrible century.

The Trade Unions never developed outside the large towns and their rise to national prominence belongs to the present century. But in every one of the rebel associations there were proletarian layers. The initiating force behind all the political agitations was not the unemployed or sweated wage-worker, but the *landless* worker, and would-be owner-cultivator. Industry had not developed enough to make any conscious and clear permanent distinction between the workers and the capitalists as a class.

MARK STARR.

## The SEVEN DREAMERS of the LABOUR PARTY

**T**HIS booklet\* deserves attention. It is an exceedingly interesting symptom. Certain young and able Labour Party intellectuals have been feeling a trifle uneasy about the Labour Party's policy. They have felt uneasy both as intellectuals and as Socialists. As intellectuals they feel that Labour

\**The Labour Party's Aim*, by Seven Members of the Labour Party. (Allen and Unwin, 1s. 6d.)

policy has been lacking in theoretical soundness ; as Socialists they feel that Labour policy is too negative and critical—its reformism aims at remedying certain evils in the present system, not at constructing a new system of communal enterprise. Already Reformist leaders are beginning to accept the assumptions of the existing system.

The effect of Reformism on the intellectual leaders of the movement has been to restrict the scope of their thought by keeping them occupied on the working out of measures to palliate the results of Capitalism. Many Socialists . . . have tended more and more to accept the general outlook of the capitalist society of to-day, and ceased to think in terms of the Socialist society of to-morrow . . . If (the Labour Party) seeks to burden capitalism rather than to abolish it, then will Labour come to power, not as the " Hope of the World " or the " Bringer of the New Dawn," but as the temporary alternative to a capitalist government of Liberals or Tories.

What then do these uneasy Reformists propose ? They propose that the first principle of Labour policy should be to benefit the poor at the expense of the rich. A Capital Levy is good from a Labour standpoint, but bad if it leaves the capitalist class as they are at present. The second principle should be the extension of communal enterprise ; this is necessary, in fact, in order to obviate the evils of discouragement of capitalist enterprise (and hence decline of productivity) which the first principle tends to produce. This is the gist of a well-written economic section. If more emphasis were placed on this second principle, it is urged, practical considerations would create less need for limitations on the first principle.

In the international sphere it is urged that Labour should adopt, not the old Liberal policy of negative pacifism, but a policy of economic co-operation. For this policy, no doubt, the full support of the Rothschilds and J. P. Morgans could be obtained !

Now, those who have read Mr. Childe's book on the Australian Labour movement will recognise in this uneasiness of " The Seven " precisely the kind of thing which continually recurs when a Labour Party thinking merely in terms of the Parliamentary tactic approaches to power. The " practical politicians," caught up in the byways of bourgeois constitutionalism, lose their sense of the class issue ; and the rank and file endeavour to drag them back to loyalty to the Party's aims. Now we see that it is faintly dawning on representative members of the Labour Party—in touch with Eccleston Square—that the Labour Party has become a middle class party. It has never been more (except in name) than the political department of the Trade Unions ; to-day, dominated intellectually by Fabianism, its very appeals for a Capital Levy are based on the argument that it will not hurt the capitalist class !

But the reason why The Seven get little further than mere disquiet is very clear from the omissions of the book. They clearly have no

conception of the class issue ; they still think in terms of " rights " and " political principles " and " public opinion," and in the old academic compartments of thought. It is significant that in this product of seven able minds not one word appears about the relation between class and the State. The State is assumed throughout to be a mystic representation of " the general will." " It is necessary to keep overhauling the machine to bring it into harmony with a developing society." That is all ! Not a hint that the State is merely the political department of capitalism !

Imperialism, of course, is merely the result of evil passions and folly, to be expurgated by the spirituality and wisdom of " Economic Internationalism ! " They have, no doubt, followed the history of recent events in Germany. Yet there is no suggestion that the fundamental problem is one of *power*, and that to achieve Socialism the workers must *attack* the capitalist State, not summon its aid.

Everything is conceived in terms of the Parliamentary tactic. There is no sense of the class struggle as a unitary whole. So this is what the new Cole-reformed W.E.A. is to foist upon the workers !

But the " Seven Dreamers of the Labour Party " have performed a valuable service : they have signalled in their pathetic way the beginning of a movement among the masses of the workers—a movement leftward.

M. H. DOBB.

## NOTES BY THE WAY for Students and Tutors

### *The Story of the Sea*

**T**HIS is the title of a new I.W.W. pamphlet (25 cents) which traces the development of navigation, and winds up with a plea for one union for all marine transport workers. The historical portion contains such racy remarks as : " that class of people, whom the world honours by the name of historians, and who have ever been more concerned about a dead monarch than a living worker " ; or, again, a reference to Trafalgar : " where the one-eyed Nelson defeated the French and earned the right to have hideous monuments erected to his memory in every part of Britain. The divorce courts thus missed a chance of dissecting his love affairs, which would possibly have made him even more famous."

There is a striking paragraph on labour-saving machinery in the shipping industry : " In Buenos Ayres, as in London and other parts of the world, the shipping and stevedoring companies have been introducing labour-saving devices. Wheat is now loaded in Rosario by elevators and unloaded in Liverpool by suction pipes. Electric cranes and winches reduce the number of days now spent in port by ships and fewer dockers are necessary to work them. The slings get larger and the contractors attempt to get six men to do the work of eight. The handling of vast quantities of coal has almost eliminated the coal workers, so perfect has machinery become. In 1920 one of the Luckenbach boats loaded over 12,000 tons of coal in less than eight hours at an East Coast loading slip. A

few electricians and a few trimmers and the job was through. The introduction of oil as fuel is displacing thousands of workers formerly engaged in bunkering ships. The oil lines are laid on the ship and in a couple of hours, her bunker tanks are full. As the number of oil burners will increase, fewer ships will be engaged in the carrying of coal, and more and more port workers will find themselves out of work. The big oil tankers, that bring oil from Mexico, unload their huge cargoes in a few hours and then depart. They can make three voyages while coal-carrying ships can make only two. This reduces the number of men on ships as well as on shore."

#### *A Correction*

Will those comrades who possess a copy of Postgate's *Revolution from 1789 to 1906* correct a slip which has crept in on page 288? The date of the battle of Sedan is given as Sept. 22nd instead of Sept. 2nd, and the line has been transposed accordingly. The correct sequence of events is given on p. 277.

#### *Beware of the Boosters!*

The following extracts from a letter from a New South Wales Pleb speaks for itself as a comment on a side of Imperial development which will *not* be "featured" at the forthcoming Empire Exhibition:—

"Just a line giving some real facts of matters here, as our Mr. E. H. Farrar, Minister for Labour and Industry in the Fuller Government, will be leaving for the Empire Exhibition in January, on a holiday to boost 'Sunny New South Wales.' The *Daily Telegraph* (August, 1923), a Tory paper states: 'Generally, however, the men we most need are those who can be turned into direct producers from the land.'

"Every vessel arriving has these eligible settlers. Official N.S.W. figures here relate that, in a period of nine months, forty blocks were made available, and there were 4,889 applicants for them. As many as 877 applied for one block, at Corowa.

"In Farrar's last monthly report he gives 9,000 registered unemployed at the Labour Bureau, Circular Quay. But the actual number is more like

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20,000 in New South Wales, 70,000 through the Commonwealth.

"The Empire and Navy Leagues, Salvation Army, Australia House, the Agent Generals for various States and other agents in England, inform you people there is plenty of work, at good conditions also good wages. They will not tell you, neither will our Mr. E. H. Farrar tell you when he comes, of cases I now quote that happened here recently.

"Francis Wilson, body found in Lane Cove River; Stanley Dale Hewitson, body found at Frenchman's Beach, La Perouse; Claude Hatton, found with his throat cut. An ex-soldier, Bowack, who threw himself over the Gat upon the rocks at Watson's Bay. They don't talk of the bodies found dead in the Sydney Domain (Park) or cases of petty stealing of men, all of whom were driven to desperation by being unable to obtain jobs."

#### *Inflation and Deflation*

In answer to inquiries as to the amount of Inflation or Deflation since 1914, these are the facts:—

There are two kinds of currency to be noticed: (a) legal-tender money (Treasury notes, bank notes, gold), and (b) credit-money (cheques, etc.) The latter can be estimated roughly by the volume of bank deposits. When a bank gives a loan or credit, it gives people the right to draw cheques, and so increases the volume of credit-money,

and the volume of deposits (because a cheque when paid is usually paid *into* someone's current or deposit account). It is thus by an increase in bank-loans that Inflation starts. The increase in credit-money raises prices, and to buy goods at the higher price-level, people need more legal-tender money.

Between 1914 and 1920, legal-tender currency increased by two and a half times. Bank deposits increased in about the same proportion (in Dec., 1913, they were £1,033 millions, in Dec., 1921, they were £2,522 millions).

In the beginning of 1920, the Government adopted the recommendations of the Cunliffe Committee to restrict

the issue of Treasury notes. The bank raised its rate to 7 per cent, and "rationed" bank loans. The Inflation was, therefore, checked and turned to Deflation. Between 1920 and Dec., 1922, the net circulation of bank notes and treasury notes fell from £483,000,000 to £403,000,000, or by 17 per cent.; bank deposits, however, have not fallen by much more than 10 per cent.

The reason why the fall in prices since 1920 has been so much greater than the fall in the volume of money is due to the diminished speed (or velocity) of circulation of money which Mr. McKenna estimates at a fall of 40 per cent.

## Labour and Wages in the U.S.A.

*The Government—Strikebreaker.* By Jay Lovestone (Workers' Party of America. 75 cents).

*Blood and Steel.* By Jay Lovestone (Workers' Party of America. 10 cents).

During the recent General Election certain Labour politicians endeavoured to persuade the British bourgeoisie that a policy of wage increase was all that was necessary to revive British trade. On the strength of flying visits to the United States—where there are always plenty of state and trade union officials ready to entertain and, if necessary, to bamboozle "nice" Labour leaders from abroad—wonderful stories were put in circulation about the wisdom of the American capitalists in deliberately choosing to pay their workers well and thus maintaining their home market. It was difficult at the moment, without also injuring the chances of Labour candidates, for anyone who knew better to expose the gullibility or ill-faith of the purveyors of this poisonous nonsense.

Now, however, that the election is over, those among the Labour M.P.s who show a disposition to toady to American big business and its governmental agents should be given immediate curative treatment. A single reading of Jay Lovestone's *The Government—Strikebreaker* will be sufficient in all but the most obstinate cases.

Comrade Lovestone gives us the detailed story of what he rightly calls

"the grand offensive against the workers" in 1922. Drastic wage-cuts had everywhere been forced upon the workers during the great "depression" which followed the War. As in this country, dividends alone managed to bear up amid the encircling gloom. Feeling that this praiseworthy exception to the general rule deserved encouragement, the employers determined upon fresh applications of the principle that "to him that hath shall be given."

The textile workers of New England were the first to move into action to resist the new attacks upon the already low pay and poor conditions of the wage-earners. The present reviewer lived in New England for nearly seven years, and was on the spot during the opening phases of what Lovestone describes as "one of the most glorious battles in the annals of our labour history." The workers were of widely different nationalities—Syrians, Scandinavians, Poles, French-Canadians, Anglo Saxons, Russians, Germans, Italians, Finns, Armenians, and a host of others. Besides the racial obstacle to a united front, they had to overcome the obstruction of four warring sets of union officials. Yet such was their spirit that they were able to fight the bosses to a standstill, and were only prevented by their "leaders" from making substantial gains.

Very similar in essentials were the experiences of the miners and railway shopmen in the onslaughts made upon

them in the same year. Everywhere the aim of the union officials was to divide and isolate the workers. The miners, like the textile workers, held off their enemies for the time being, but the railway shopmen were less lucky. In its treatment of the railway strike the Government behaved with more than usual brutality, and Attorney-General Daugherty in applying for an injunction against the railway workers, declared:—

“ I will use the power of the Government of the United States within my control to prevent the labour unions of the country from destroying the open (*i.e.*, the non-union) shop.”

British trade unionists will be interested to know what kind of a Government it is that some of their leaders want to bring into closer touch with European problems.

Lovestone's whole purpose is to demonstrate, from sufferings that are still fresh in the minds of American trade unionists, that the state is an organ of class rule. His clear, well-annotated narrative of the events of 1922 will carry conviction on that point to thousands who would never look at a theoretical exposition of Marxian doctrine. The failures due to bad leadership are clearly explained, and

lessons are drawn for use in the further conflicts now preparing. The new trade depression which Lovestone predicted in May last is already beginning to be felt, and there can be no doubt that the bosses will take full advantage thereof. Fortunately the “flurry” of prosperity has afforded the workers a breathing spell, and the rapid growth of the Trade Union Educational League shows that many, at any rate, of the American workers have assimilated the instruction in militant unity given by that organisation.

*Blood and Steel* is a 32-page pamphlet dealing with the 12-hour day in the steel industry. It is crammed with facts concerning the everyday life of the American wage-earner, and by itself furnishes a complete refutation of the fairy tale that the United States are a sort of wage-slaves' earthly paradise. Our own Labour Research Department as recently as July last, announced that in power to purchase a given food budget the pay of the American “unskilled” labourer amounts to no more than 86 per cent. of the princely remuneration received by similar toilers in this country!

W. T. COLYER.

## RECENT BOOKS

### MILNERISM

*Questions of The Hour.* By Viscount Milner (Hodder and Stoughton, 7s. 6d.).

**A** BOOK by a real live member of the aristocracy, who has graduated, moreover, in the schools of Politics, Journalism, the Civil Service and Commerce, is bound to be illuminating, if not instructive. This book consists of five essays, loosely connected, but all more or less sermons on the text of “Imperial Expansion.”

The second of these, entitled “Towards Peace in Industry,” is made up of the *Observer* articles which gave rise to considerable comment and discussion some months ago. It entitles its author to rank with the pale pink Labourites, whose pet scheme is “Nationalisation with Compensation.”

The way to attain “Peace in Industry” is by the creation of a “new spirit,” a spirit that is created by the Joint Industrial Councils and by Mr. Arthur Henderson's “Industrial Parliament.” The whole essay, in fact, goes just about as far as the programme of the British Labour Party, and might be studied with advantage by some of its present leaders.

In essay number three—“The Policy of Labour,” Viscount Milner waxes lyrical about our mighty and glorious empire, and explains that we hold it for the purpose of giving the poor benighted people of other lands the benefit of our “civilised society.” Amritsar, Egypt, the Black and Tans, are not mentioned.

The two remaining essays deal with the Anti-Waste Campaign, and the establishment of a “League of British Nations.”

The three PLEBS Textbooks, *Geography, Economics and Imperialism*, can be bought for the same money as *Questions of the Hour*. They are a far better investment.

F. A. D. S.

#### NANSEN

*Russia and Peace*. By Dr. Fridtjof Nansen (Allen and Unwin, 5s.).

Dr. Nansen's purpose in writing this book is, as he says in the preface, to analyse the Russian problem with a view to arriving at a better understanding between peoples of different nationalities, in order to bring order out of the existing chaos. It is a further development of the splendid work he has done for the suffering masses in Russia.

To readers of The PLEBS who are also readers of the *Manchester Guardian*, and who have access to other sources of reliable information, the book contains little that is new. The chapters dealing with trade, finance, transport, and agriculture throw new light, perhaps, on one or two problems, particularly those of transport, agriculture and unemployment. They are really a description of the working out of the N.E.P. of the Soviet Government. But on reading the chapters at the beginning and end of the book—especially the one on the economic equilibrium of Europe—one is forced to the conclusion that Dr. Nansen, to whom, of course, great and unsparing tribute must be paid for his relief work, is a typical "humanitarian" in thought.

With all his knowledge of Russia and of other countries both before and since the war, he does not, yet, seem to recognise that the political factor is only the outcome of economic conditions. He speaks of a wish for the return of normal economic conditions, of normal economic equilibrium; says that "Even the military soviet circles are aware of the fundamental importance of the economic factor." He pleads for a restoration of "international equilibrium."

This suggests that he, and those who think as he does, would be satisfied with a return to the conditions prior to 1914. There seems to be no realisation of the fact that conditions,

such as he describes, of, say, the burning of grain as fuel in one part of the world while thousands are dying of starvation in another, are not peculiar to the years since the war. Does he not realise that these conditions, and the social problems of which he speaks in his later chapters are the results of that international economic equilibrium for the restoration of which he pleads? Persons of the same school as the author of this book are of immense value now. How much more valuable they would be if they would make an intensive study into the causes of the evils they work so hard to remedy!

C. S. T.

#### A LIBERAL ON IMPERIALISM

*Economic Imperialism and International Relations during the last Fifty Years*. By Prof. Achille Viallate (The Macmillan Co., New York. \$2).

The author of this book is a Professor of the Free School of Political Sciences, Paris. He describes the economic changes of the nineteenth century, the tremendous growth of industrialism, and the development from "economic liberalism" (Manchesterism) to Imperialism. Summing up, he declares that "the most important result of the economic transformation of the nineteenth century is that it *made impossible an independent life for civilised nations* . . . Our world now lives an economic life that flows over the political frontiers." But he regards Imperialism only as the expression of a "too ardent nationalism," and thinks that "the adoption of a general policy of moderate protection"—world-wide free trade being "perhaps too ideal an aim"—would make the world once more quite a comfortable place to live in (the war having "brutally arrested a period of continuous progress"). Which suggests that if the Free School of Political Sciences, Paris, is really "Free," its Professors do not make too riotous a use of their liberty.

Nevertheless, despite the feebleness of its conclusions, the major part of the volume—the historical chapters dealing with the partition of Africa, the advent of the United States and its Caribbean "expansion," the rise of

Germany, and the clash of Imperialisms in the Far East—is quite useful, being rather more fully “documented” as regards Treaties and international agreements of various kinds than most short books on the subject.

J. F. H.

#### A PSYCHO-ANALYST LOOKS AT THE WORLD

*Essays in Applied Psycho-Analysis.* By Ernest Jones, M.D. (Allen and Unwin. 18s. net).

Has not the time come for psychoanalysts to attend more seriously to the business of definition? In this book, for instance, most of Dr. Jones's careful work fails of its effect simply because of the vagueness of the terms upon which the main arguments depend. The conceptions of “repression,” “sublimation,” and the “unconscious” are fundamental to psycho-analytic theory and practice, but let anyone take pp. 384-90, especially 386, and compare them with pp. 49-59, 319, 356-359, 369, 377 (“repression” and “sublimation”); or pp. 49-53, 358, 383, 383 (the “unconscious”), and he will see the point of this criticism.

The two essays in which this weakness is most noticeable (together they fill nearly half the book), are those in which Dr. Jones follows up one of the many alluring lines of thought originated by Freud—the attempt to identify the notions and symbols employed by “primitive man” with those elicited by psycho-analysis from the “unconscious” mind of man living to-day. “The Symbolic Significance of Salt” offers an explanation of the superstition that it is unlucky to spill the salt; “The Madonna's Conception through the Ear” is an attempt to illustrate the theory that religion and art alike take their rise in the sexual phantasies of infancy. There are some reckless statements which will irritate students of primitive culture; there is also plenty of good work. The index is bad, and so is some of the language: e.g., “characterology” and “folkloristic.” The essays on “Hamlet,” “Andrea Del Sarto” and “Louis Napoleon” are the most successful.

D. T.

#### THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTIONIST *Labour and the Industrial Revolution.*

By E. C. Fairchild (Allen and Unwin. Cloth, 5s., paper, 3s. 6d.).

The plan of this book is excellent except for the position of chapters 9 and 10, which should change places to preserve the sequence of economic theory from Smith to Ricardo. It opens with a treatment of the political conditions in England in the eighteenth century, and goes on to discuss agriculture, population, the relation of economic theory to the social circumstances of the time and its effect on the developing class-struggle. Then come Education, the Poor Law Crisis, Theories of Labour Rights, Marx, the Reform Bill and the Control of Industry.

The ending, taken with certain passages in the context, is rather suggestive: “Ninety years of later history have shown that neither the hysteria of summary seizure, nor the strike, whatever its work in other directions, can ever wrest the means of production from the hands of the owners. The control of the State which makes and unmakes private property, is to be won only by political action, through the avenues of authority. In Western civilisation the period when States could be transformed by any other means is long since past.”

The economic sections of the book are unsatisfactory. The implication of the class-struggle in Ricardo's theory is not sufficiently emphasised and his so-called “iron law” over-stressed. To say in discussing Marx, that, “whilst these composite energies (managers, foremen, etc.) are required for the output of commodities, however, the Marxist analysis deduces the conclusion that manual labour alone is the measure of their values” is, to put it mildly, misleading.

Though the material presented is not new, its collection into one small book in such a correlated form will be very useful for getting an all-round knowledge of the period from 1760 to 1832. There is no bibliography and a rather meagre index.

A. M. R.

## GEOGRAPHY

*The World About Us: A Study in Geographical Environment.* By O. J. R. Howarth (Oxford University Press, World's Manuals. 2s. 6d.).

This is an interestingly written, yet somewhat unsatisfying little book. It discusses the influence of various geographical factors at various stages of human history; but the method of treatment adopted leaves one with the kind of feeling one has after a hurried run round a good museum—a doubt whether a hasty glance at hundreds of "specimens" is as helpful as a really satisfying look at two or three.

Mr. Howarth makes a welcome protest against the tendency on the part of some geographers to "worship geographical environment as a fetish," and instances the "dangerous type of geographical statement which runs in this way: 'The British have founded an empire overseas because their home is in a group of islands situated in the centre of the land-hemisphere.'" But while rightly insisting that geographical factors must be related to other conditions and influences, he does not admit that "man, as he advances in civilisation, necessarily becomes less dependent on his environment...." Civilised men, though they may no longer be affected by some of the simpler and more direct conditions of environment which influenced primitive peoples, yet come "under the influence of a wider circle of geographical phenomena." Steam-power, for example, may have done away with man's dependence on the winds as a means of driving his ships; but the dependence is transferred to coal-fields or oil-wells.

One may, perhaps, be permitted to remark that the ninety-four pages and nine maps of this book do not seem quite as good value for the money as the 150 pages and forty-four maps of *The Plebs Geography Textbook*.

Q.

## MORE PROBLEMS THAN POLICY

*British Trade Unionism: Problems and Policy.* By G. D. H. Cole (Labour Research Department Syllabus, No. 10, 6d.).

This syllabus is written in Mr. Cole's well-known manner—strictly impartial.

For the Labour Man's Bookshelf

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In our opinion what is wanted is not so much the tabulating of numerous problems garnered from many conferences of trade-unionists, but a definite lead. The setbacks experienced of late demand the formulation of a policy to overcome the admitted defects of trade-union organisation. Further, a new aim should be insisted upon. Each problem, such as those of administration, re-organisation, functions of Trades Councils, etc., should be stated, and then practical proposals for dealing with the problem formulated. All the time stressing that these proposals converge in the *new* aim, that of bringing about a new social order.

However, we don't want to damn with faint praise, any more than to make the author faint with damn praise; so, to sum up, the syllabus is distinctly useful, the bibliography excellent, and the hints to students, class-readers, and tutors practical and timely.

J. H.

The latest addition to the Labour Research Dept.'s Syllabus Series is *Economic Geography*, by J. F. Horrabin, based on the later chapters of the *Plebs Economic Geography Textbook*.

## OUR READERS' VIEWS

*The pages of THE PLEBS are open for discussion, by our readers, of any subjects of general interest to workers. We beg correspondents to come straight to the point, and to be as brief as possible. Otherwise we can find space for only a few of the many letters we receive.*

DIETZGEN

DEAR COMRADE,—Is not our educational movement based on the teachings of Marx and Dietzgen, because it is only in these teachings we can find the scientific explanation of how and why human society develops, and of how and why man makes and changes his ideas? In short, do we not get in these teachings the "clear and essential notions about the scientific method" which Dobb asserts is required?

If Marx and Dietzgen do not enable us to explain the varied and complex social phenomena of the present time, then by all means let us put them both on the shelf. But I contend we can explain these by means of the Marxian method, and this is the greatest proof of its scientific accuracy, when a movement can explain its own origin and development by means of the method it teaches. Please observe, as it will save much confusion and misunderstanding, I state they have given us "the scientific method." They have not given us the sum total of human knowledge in the form of a doctrine, which has to be learned by heart, and then mechanically repeated like the multiplication table, but they have given us the "scientific method" whereby to acquire knowledge and explain social problems, hence, it follows, the Marxian theory is one to be first mastered, and then applied (not mechanically repeated) to the explanation of existing social problems and theories.

I would point out that by means of the Marxian theory we can explain to Comrades Dobb and Postgate why intellectuals like themselves are joining the revolutionary movement of the workers, and why "the number of University men who come over to our side of the educational movement increases" (Dec. PLEBS). The experienced tutor gives this explanation to the classes, and why they should be

welcomed, and (oh! horror) why, at the outset, there are certain things to be guarded against.

Finally, allow me to recommend to our two comrades, as a cure for the remnants of the orthodox ideology of the Universities still remaining in their heads, that they both read and study closely, first, the translated introduction of N. Buharin to his book, *The Theory of Historical Materialism*, published in the April PLEBS, and second, the *Essays on the Materialist Conception of History*, by Antonio Labriola, who was himself a Professor in the University of Rome. When they have grasped the substance of these writings I will be prepared to argue the matter further with them if they so desire.

Yours faithfully,

ROBERT HOLDER.

DEAR COMRADE,—Anything which contributes to the purging of the human mind of metaphysical vaporings is well worth consideration and "poor old Josef" is the lad to do it. It is not sufficient to say "I don't know" in the words of the agnostic, but to be able to firmly assert that a god or any other form of abstraction has no existence, that such things are merely a matter of time and place. There must not be the slightest loophole for the introduction of any other factor into the conduct of human affairs outside material conditions. R. W. P. must get down to it or buy a prayer mat.

He may talk about putting "poor old Josef" on the shelf, but if the working class are not taught that no Divine hand will do things for them, they will become in the words of Paul Lafargue miserable mendicants bleating to our father to give them this day their daily bread. They will be looking to someone else to do things for them; led here and there by any brass faced individual who labels himself Labour, especially

if he has an "Iconoclast" to play John the Baptist to him. I was brought up in a theological atmosphere and I had the greatest difficulty in the world to rid myself of its baneful influence, and not until I got a thorough grip of the monism of J. Dietzgen was I ever able to give a logical backing to my economics.

Yours fraternally,  
F. L. RIMINGTON.

DEAR COMRADE,—R. W. P. asks "what good" the teaching of Dietzgen is to us?

In the first place, scarcely any teacher considers the whole of Dietzgen's output to be worth while. Much of it is hair-splitting and padding. But its core is indispensable. It is—to use the words of the title of K. Pearson's book—The Grammar of Science. Its primary purpose is to make clear the connection between the world of sense-perceptions, and the world of abstract concepts. It enjoins the student to relate these two worlds deliberately and consciously. If this is done, mental pictures of dead experiences will cease to mar present judgment.

Further, Dietzgen encourages the exercise of the critical faculty, and what is more important, demands us to apply the same kind of reasoning to all things. Modern psychology teaches why this is not done, but, only the understanding of the science of reasoning can minimise this proneness to err. The statement of the method of science is generally followed by its application to those concepts, such as morality and justice, whose derivation from sense-material is more or less obscure.

Dietzgen is difficult to grasp, because of the heterodoxy of the matter, and the writer's manner of expression. But if the spirit is sought after, and not the word, then it becomes infinitely easier. Dietzgen's theory should be made the foundation of all education, and particularly of the iconoclastic Socialist's. Are Socialists any more monistic in thought than others? Are they prepared to be ruthless in reasoning out all questions?

Let the essence of his views be re-stated in simple language, and be called the method of science. Omit the history of philosophy. Apply the

theory to those ideas round which the class struggle is circling, and a long-felt want of the Labour College Classes will be satisfied.

Yes, Dietzgen is of value to us, for we have to cater for those students who have never had the opportunity to understand the method of science. Couple it with formal logic and modern psychology, and working-class students may have a tremendous intellectual grasp.

Yours,  
F. P.

DEAR COMRADE,—Surely R. W. P. is pulling our legs! Is he quite serious when he asks: "Is Dietzgen, and all Dietzgen stands for, worth studying at all?"

It is hard to see how any Socialist writer can fail to realise the immense value Dietzgen's work is. The PLEBS tells us to "do our own thinking." The practical use of Dietzgen is that he teaches us *how* to do our own thinking.

It's all very fine for Bourgeois Thinkers like R. W. P. to talk of putting "old Joseph on the shelf." That is just what most other Bourgeois would like to do with Marx, Engels, Dietzgen, and all the rest of our Proletarian Thinkers.

It isn't less of Dietzgen we want, but a great deal more.

Fraternally yours,  
T. GORDON NOWELL.

#### "ENGLISH FOR HOME STUDENTS"

DEAR SIR,—Mr. Adkins "dislikes" *duco* as a root for education—says indeed, "it must come from a different root entirely," which sounds like something more than dislike; but his only basis for suggesting *edo* is, confessedly, "imagination." This is mere play.

Again, it does not matter how many *lines* are given to the word "only." From the two examples given a newcomer could not possibly use the word "only" intelligently, because no rule is given for its use.

Yours, etc.,  
A. M. R.

#### THE AIM OF EDUCATION

DEAR COMRADE,—Owing to economic circumstances over which I have insufficient control I read The PLEBS for

the last three months all at once. The result is a fermentation of annoyance and inquiry on two subjects connected with education.

There was a correspondence about education and children, and there was a recrudescence of the eternal quarrel between N.C.L.C. and W.E.A. This latter was chiefly made up of misunderstanding of the functions of the two organisations, and hot air.

The N.C.L.C. is out for an education to produce a Revolution. Very good; in heaven's name let it work, and all good luck to it!

The W.E.A. is out to give people an education in the wider sense of developing their personalities, and helping to produce an intelligent outlook. Very good; it is also doing a fine work, and may it prosper!

Why not let the two organisations each carry on their own work, without acrimonious disputes? There is ample room for both as yet.

To turn to the question of the education of children:—

Just as the W.E.A. has its place and function, so has the National Education carried on by the capitalist state; and just as the revolutionist should take his place in the W.E.A. wherever possible, so should he take his place in the (capitalist) teaching profession.

But he must know what he wants to do and how to do it.

Firstly I believe very strongly that far and away the most important thing to aim at is a spirit of inquiry—the will to know, to find out—accompanied by a scientific scepticism which will make him question everything he is told and judge it by his own standards, whether it be told him by St. Paul, by William Paul or by Sir Paul Dukes.

Secondly, to help him as far as possible in the application of this spirit to the issues which will affect him most, we must point out to him—to give crude illustrations—that just as accounts of historical incidents given on the one hand by his history book, and on the other hand by an original document of say, a worker of the time, do not tally, so the accounts of a strike to-day appearing in the *Times*, the *Daily Herald*, and the *Daily News* show very striking differences.

It is vitally important that we catch

youth while it is youthful. In spite of his Methuselah theories, Shaw would agree that anybody—except himself—is hopeless if he is not Red before the age of forty. If we are to be the fathers of the Revolution, it is our children who will make it, and unless our children are well prepared and well educated *out* of bourgeois habits of mind they will make it badly.

Yours,

R. G. P.

[In his opening paragraphs our correspondent assumes that any and every sort of education, whatever its aim, is desirable. By the time he reached the end of his letter he had clarified his own ideas sufficiently to see that the important thing is to educate people *out* of bourgeois habits of mind. This last is precisely the justification for an *independent* working-class educational movement, and for this movement's "acrimonious" hostility towards an institution like the W.E.A., which has not yet got so far as to realise that there is such a thing as a "bourgeois habit of mind" in education.—ED., PLEBS.]

#### INNOCENTS ABROAD

DEAR EDITOR,—In *The Plebs* recently there was some discussion as to the advisability of publishing the proceedings of the Congresses of the International in abridged form. By all means let this be available; but in my opinion an absolutely full report should also be issued, so that Western readers can judge of the sense or folly—as the case may be—propounded at such Congresses.

As an illustration of what I mean I cannot do better than refer to the Fourth World Congress of the Communist International held at Moscow, Nov.-Dec., 1922. I read in *l'Humanite* at the time, in a dispatch from Moscow, that somebody called Clark (a British delegate) in a speech at the Congress declared that one million trade unionists in Britain were under the influence of the British Communist Party!! Such a statement was sheer nonsense, of course, but on looking at the report of the speech in the official volume of the Congress provided for British readers, I could not find any such statement in the abridged proceedings as published!

Why this important omission? How can the International be advised of the true position of British workers if such nonsensical statements are allowed to be put forward in Moscow, without the opportunity for correction from this side?

Yours faithfully,  
A. P. L.

## SCOTTISH TEACHERS AND THE W.E.A.

DEAR COMRADE,—My report of the meeting addressed by Mr. Highton was truthful and exact. That I did not remain until the finish of the business was, perhaps, a mistake. It was my second meeting that evening, and I had another one still to attend. In any case, I hope that I retain a proper sense of proportion. Were I going pigeon shooting, I should not arm myself with a 15in. howitzer; why then should I spend a whole evening refuting the arguments of a W.E.A. propagandist?

As it has since happened the Socialist Teachers, by nine votes to eight, decided to affiliate, for six months, to the W.E.A. This result was made possible by the compulsory absence of several members at S.L.C. classes. When the time limit expires we shall return to the attack. Meanwhile all power to the West of Scotland Labour College, and its sixteen thousand students. Mr. Highton had better tread warily lest the Glasgow Trades and Labour Council of which he is still President—does not follow the example of the Edinburgh Trades and Labour Council and withdraw its affiliation from his alleged working-class educational organisation.

Yours sincerely,  
ROBERT FYFE.

## PLEBS AND ENGLISH

DEAR COMRADE,—I would like to commend to the notice of PLEBS readers a book which I have found exceedingly useful in helping one to *express* oneself, whether in writing or speech—*Matter, Form, and Style*, by Hardress O'Grady. Perhaps we could have a review or some students suggest other similar books.

Yours truly,  
L. B.

[We have not come across the book mentioned. Does our correspondent know Adkins' *English for Home Students* (1s. 2d. postpaid from PLEBS)?]

## THE ECONOMICS TEXTBOOK

DEAR COMRADE,—Will someone please explain what virtues "communal production" may have in the case of works calling for logical synthesis of treatment?

I am using *An Outline of Economics* as textbook in conducting classes, and, while very useful in some respects, I find serious blemishes in its broken logic, lack of balance and inadequate treatment of the theoretical part. One gets the impression that parts have been spatchcocked into the text.

In addition there are minor defects suggesting rush work. For instance, after distinguishing nominal, real and relative wage, we get this on p. 28: "If a man is getting 45s. a week, but has to spend on an average 5s. a week on tools, his real wages are only 40s. a week." Doubtless what is meant is *actual* wage.

Again, on p. 42, fixed and circulating capital is explained, and I take occasion to amplify by noting that a railway engine is a part of fixed capital—that the word does not mean fixed to the soil, or anywhere else. Then I come to p. 45 and find "fixed capital" used to designate capital "which is either incorporated in the soil or takes root in it."

Again, on p. 51, "Indestructibility" and "Utility" are given as special qualifications of gold as the universal equivalent. The first should surely be *durability*, and "utility" should have no place there at all, since all commodities have the same quality. The important quality of *homogeneity* is ignored.

Yours almost in tears,  
T. H. NELSON.

[We are sorry that our comrade should so easily be moved to weep. Surely the presence of half-a-dozen slips, such as he enumerates, in a book which attempts to "pot" the whole vast subject matter of modern economics, is scarcely sufficient reason for such quick despair. As for the virtues of communal book-production, one of them is that it helps to reduce the number of such slips. For example, Comrade Nelson's own suggestions will doubtless be made use of in a second edition of the Economics book.—ED., PLEBS.]

# The NATIONAL COUNCIL of LABOUR COLLEGES

HEAD OFFICE—22 ELM ROW, EDINBURGH

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

## *Alleged Fusion of Working-Class Educational Organisations.*

SOME people, for reasons best known to themselves, seem to be circulating the idea that steps have been taken through the medium of the T.U.C. Education Subcommittee to arrange for the fusion of all working-class educational organisations. This is not correct. All that has happened is that the possibilities have been explored, but so far two great difficulties stand in the way: (1) the conflict of principle between I.W.C.E. and W.E.A.ism; (2) the dependence of the W.E.A. and its subsidiary bodies, and Ruskin College, on State grants.

*The General Election.*—The N.C.L.C. Executive recommended that all classes should close down during the last week of the Election. Where lecturers were standing for Parliament the suspension of classes was naturally longer. But the political struggle has intensified working-class interest in working-class problems and Colleges should start the New Year with a big advance all along the line.

*What of those Circulars?*—Nelson, we're told, won fame by putting his blind eye to the telescope. This, however, is no justification for some of our local secretaries' forgetting to deal with circulars sent from Head Office. Will the absent-minded ones please note? The campaign detailed in Circular Three should get every attention.

*Lantern Lectures.*—Local Colleges should make more use of Lantern Lectures. By opening them to the public and charging sixpence for admission (getting exemption from Entertainment Tax) it is possible to tap layers of workers who can't be approached by means of a class, and, at the same time, to realise a profit which can be used to carry on class-work. Edinburgh's profit from lantern lectures last year was £53.

*Annual Meeting.*—In consequence of difficulties having arisen in the way of meeting at Scarborough at Whitsun, the Annual Meeting of the N.C.L.C. will, in all probability, take place during a week-end in April, perhaps in Leeds.

## *N.C.L.C. Directory Additions.*

Div. 3.—Lowestoft N.C.L.C. Council,  
Sec.: H. Edmonds, 57,  
Reeve Street.

Div. 8.—N. Lancs Area Council, Sec.:  
Mrs. C. S. Taylor, 17, Rose  
Terrace, Ashton, Preston.

Div. 10.—Fife Local Committee, S.L.C.  
Sec.: c/o Swann, Hazel-  
bank, Kelty.

„ Paisley District Local Com-  
mittee, S.L.C. Sec.: D.  
Dick, 1, Henderson Street,  
Paisley.

„ Lerwick, Dist. Sec.: Econo-  
mics Club, 5, Commercial  
Road, Lerwick.

## *What the Divisions are Doing.*

Div. 1.—Organiser Phippen reports 28 classes in the London area, excluding Woolwich. A manifesto has been sent out on behalf of the London Council and signed by a number of prominent T.U. officials, urging working-class organisations to support I.W.C.E.

Div. 2.—During most of November activities were suspended as result of the fact that Organiser D. W. Thomas was standing as Labour Candidate for South Dorset. It was a "propaganda fight," but it has laid the foundations for victory later.

Div. 3.—The Election also interrupted the work here. Organiser Mark Starr fought Wimbledon for Labour, and some fine spade work was done. Seventeen classes at present running in the Division. George Hicks will speak for the Hitchin Class, Labour Club, Jan. 6th, 7 p.m.; play reading in the afternoon at 3 p.m.

Div. 4.—Steps are being taken to stimulate the interest of the S.W.M.F. in the class work, and it is hoped that

very shortly the whole movement in South Wales will be on a substantially improved footing.

*Div. 5.*—All the Labour Colleges here doing well—Bristol leading the way.

*Div. 6.*—Further classes being arranged here, and Organiser Smith is calling a Conference in Birmingham for January 12th, to be addressed by Mark Starr.

*Div. 7.*—Hull Trades Council has made a grant of £5 towards class work. In Sheffield District the Club and Institute Union is being approached on the question of I.W.C.E. through the instrumentality of Com. Ward, an old student of the Labour College, and Com. Cree.

*Div. 8.* Liverpool reports that it has about forty Distributive Workers at one of its classes. Steps have been taken to persuade the Mersey Carters' and Motormen's Union to adopt our I.W.C.E. Educational Scheme. Manchester L.C. has arranged a class for women workers, with Com. Ellen Wilkinson as Lecturer. This should appeal to women members of N.U.D.A.W.

*Div. 9.*—North Eastern Labour College boasts a fine list of classes. The Divisional Council has decided to call a conference in Workington

for the purpose of forming a College in Cumberland. It is hoped that Com. Duffy will speak.

*Div. 10.*—The Fife Conference was a success, four Trades Councils being represented amongst other Organisations. Since then a conference has been held at Paisley for the purpose of forming a Local Committee. The chair was taken by W. Elger, Secretary of the Scottish T.U.C., and J. P. M. Millar was the speaker. S. Walker, National Sec., also attended, and D. Dick, A.U.B.T.W. Organiser, was later appointed Sec. of the Local Committee. Elsewhere will be found a memorial notice of our late tutor, John Maclean, who died amidst the turmoil of the General Election. Most of the successful Labour M.P.s in Scotland are staunch supporters of the Labour College, but it is particularly gratifying to be able to chronicle the success of Robert Spence, M.P., who a few years ago was a full-time student at the College. J. B. Payne, at one time tutor in Aberdeen, has been appointed tutor-organiser for the Glasgow District.

*Div. 11.*—Thanks to the efforts of J. Kirk, Secretary of the N.U.D.A.W. in Belfast, it is hoped to open our first class there in the course of the month.

## OUR SUMMER SCHOOL

**C**HOPWELL, Spen and District Labour Representation Committee is arranging for five students—one from each of the classes carried on under the Committee's auspices—to attend The PLEBS N.C.L.C. Summer School at Cober Hill, Scarborough, in Whit-week.

An examination is to be held, open to all students who have put in fifty per cent. of possible attendances. The Committee is paying the three guineas fee to the School for each of the

successful candidates—incidental expenses to be borne by the students themselves.

This is an excellent example to other "locals." The School will be a bigger success if it is made up of keen students who have had to exert themselves in order to get there. There is ample time to put similar schemes into operation in other districts if the matter is taken up *now*. What are the District and Divisional Committees of the N.C.L.C. going to do about it?

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**TO PLEBS LEAGUE MEMBERS:—**(i) *Subscription for 1924—one shilling—now due.*

(ii) *Ballot papers for 1924 Executive Committee will be sent to all members early this month. Please return at your earliest.*

# THE PLEBS

## ESPERANTO NOTES

*"Lord Kick us out Softly"*

**T**RANSLATION has been described as "the compound fracture of an idea." The above line was the nearest the missionaries could get to "Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing" for native Christians in the Congo. No wonder they sang it without enthusiasm. Esperanto eliminates translation difficulties.

*As Others Hear Us*

Commenting on Sessue Hayakawa's acting at the Coliseum the *D.H.* (14/11/23) said: "He might be a fine actor in his own language, but his English is almost incomprehensible." We, too, have heard men, such as Jean Longuet, massacre the English language, and we often wonder what are the candid opinions of the hearers abroad of our own prominent Labour leaders who scorn an international language because they have "a little French and German."

*When Tom Mann was a Dumb Man*

In his chapter on International

Labour Organisation (*Memoirs*, p. 138) Mann speaks thus about his early attempts to organise in Hamburg: ". . . When the crew could understand English I addressed the men . . ." When in Scandinavia, Tom spoke for successive spasms of two minutes in turn with his interpreter. In Norway while the interpreter knew English he had forgotten Norwegian. While organising in France and Spain, Mann's conversation and intercourse were restricted to those who knew a little English.

No wonder the Dutch Transport Workers decided in August last to use Esperanto for international correspondence and organisation.

*Look In*

The Workers' Esperanto Club (top floor) Minerva Cafe, 144, High Holborn, W.C.1., in addition to its class for beginners (6.30—7.30) has held on recent Saturdays, some good discussions in Esperanto on *Internationalism, Men and Women, The Doukobors, Workers' Education*. Coming lectures are *Ekonomiaj Absurdaĵoj* and *La Problemo Landa*. Each lecture begins at 8 p.m.

## Labour College (London) Students' Association

**T**HE Students, after a strenuous time electioneering, have returned to the College with sore throats and varied experiences.

The M.F.G.B. Conference has just been held in London. Students are not allowed to attend. Why? Surely no better opportunity could be afforded for an examination of the various problems facing the miners than that of attendance at the conference. The students are expected to follow mining events and to justify their residence at the College. This can only be done by giving them every opportunity of studying the position at gatherings such as these. They obtained permission to attend the Labour Party

Conference. Why not the M.F.G.B.?

Some of our members have written me concerning the Inquiry. All I can say is that it is to be hoped that now that the Election and the M.F.G.B. Conference are over, it will be possible to finish the matter early in the year.

Ruskin College, home of indefiniteness and impartiality, has showed itself once again in its true colours. Some of the students desired to help at the elections and appealed to those in authority for permission. This was turned down. Ruskin College is an institution for imparting "education"—not for preparing them for the working-class struggle!

A. G. E. (Sec.)

## The PLEBS Bookshelf

IN The PLEBS for May last, under the heading "A Play for Revolutionists," I wrote a short appreciation of Ernst Toller's "drama of the English Luddites," *The Machine Wreckers*. Another of Toller's plays has now been translated into English—*Masses and Man* (The Nonesuch Press, 4s. 6d.)

*The Machine Wreckers* dealt with the workers' movement of a century ago. *Masses and Man* is a play of to-day—or of to-morrow. Its author describes it as "a Fragment of the Social Revolution of the Twentieth Century." It is dedicated to the Workers, and to "World Revolution: Mother of New Power and Rhythm, Mother of New Peoples and Patterns." While the *Machine Wreckers* was "conventional" in form—a historical drama in verse—*Masses and Man* (as its very title hints) attempts a new form of drama, new "rhythms" and "patterns," and it would certainly make exceptional demands on producer and actors. One might still further contrast the two plays by saying that while the former play was passionately proletarian in sympathy, *Masses and Man* IS proletarian; and one is not at all surprised to learn what Toller tells us in the letter to his producer which forms the preface—that bourgeois critics found it meaningless. I am not prepared to say that the average proletarian (of countries other than Russia or Germany at any rate) would find its meaning crystal clear; but at least one may be sure that only for those to whom the struggle of the workers is "a moving, rending, all-absorbing human experience" will the play have any significance at all.

Perhaps one would be puzzled by it were one entirely ignorant of the facts of Toller's own life. The fly-leaf bears the words—"This play was first put on paper in October, 1919, the first year of the German revolution, in the prison-fortress of Niederschœnenfeld." In his prefatory letter Toller says the play "literally broke out of me and was put on paper in two days and a half." It is, therefore, a piece of

actual human *experience*—not simply a "sympathetic" interpretation of certain events; and the experience, remember, was one of War—modern war, in its ghastliest forms—then of Revolution and civil war, and finally of defeat, imprisonment, and the slow horror of living over again in one's own consciousness the events one had been through. *Masses and Man* is an attempt to dramatise that experience to express, in symbolic form, the *forces* which Toller had felt as the realities in those events—not the individuals who had played a part in them.

The characters are "The Woman," "Her Husband," "The Nameless One," "The Guide," "An Officer," "A Priest," "Bankers," "The People's Sentries," "Shadows." The scenes are set in "A Workman's Tavern," "The Interior of the Stock Exchange," "A Large Hall" (where a meeting of the workers is proceeding), "A Prisoner's Cell." But neither characters nor scenes are drawn realistically. Some of the latter indeed are labelled "dream pictures"; and even those not so labelled are just as little pictures of reality. The "story" of the play tells of the outbreak of a workers' revolution, with The Woman as one of its leaders, its momentary triumph, its bloody defeat, and the final execution of The Woman for her "crime against the State."

It is not, however, in the "action" of the play that its drama lies, but in the clash between The Woman, typifying individual human hopes and dreams, fears and enthusiasms, and The Nameless One, standing for the Masses—the great army of the disinherited, dumb, except by deeds; visionless, except for a blind striving for freedom.

We, from eternity imprisoned  
In the abyss of towering towns;  
We, laid upon the altar of mechanic  
And working systems; we,  
Whose face is blotted in the night  
of tears,  
Who from eternity are motherless—  
From the abysses of the factories  
we cry:

*When shall we live in love ?  
When shall we work at will ?  
When is deliverance ?*

The Woman, who has felt what War means, wants no more violence, no "fresh murder." The Nameless One replies—

Be silent, comrade,  
For the Cause !  
The individual, his feelings and his conscience,

What do they count ?  
The Masses count !

To The Woman "Masses are helpless, Masses are weak." The Nameless One retorts—

How blind you are !  
Masses are master !  
Masses are might !

And when, in a dream, the Woman sees her husband, the State official, about to be shot by the People's Sentries, and begs in vain that he may be forgiven and freed, the answer comes again—

Only the Masses count !

*Men* must suffer, on this side and on that ; *men* must be cruel, and conscienceless—and cowardly—*Only the Masses count.* No use to cry—

Revenge is not the will to new and living forms,  
Revenge is not the Revolution.  
The voice of the Masses answers—  
Who is not for us, is against.  
Masses must live.

In the last "picture," in the cell where the Woman lies awaiting sentence, the conflict still goes on. The Nameless One enters, bringing the promise of freedom.

Two warders have been bribed.

The third, him at the gate, I shall strike down.

*The Woman* : Strike down . . . for me . . . ?

*The Nameless* : No, for the Cause.

*The Woman* : I have no right  
To gain my life by this man's death.

*The Nameless* : The Masses have a right to you.

*The Woman* : What of the warder's right ?

The warder is a man.

*The Nameless* : As yet there are no men.

On this side men of the Masses,

On that side men of the State.

And to her bitter cry that murder is murder, in whatever cause it is committed, the Nameless One makes grim answer—

Indict those others. Indict life !

The essence of drama is conflict. And this conflict of two sides of the poet's own soul—for that is what Toller, the poet-revolutionist, dramatises in this play—will be felt as real and true, as indeed "tragic and shattering," by every worker who, though he may not—yet—have seen Revolution in action, has ever thought hard about what it must mean.

I have said nothing of the subsidiary episodes of the play—the bitter irony of the Stock Exchange scene, and its mad chorus of Bankers and Brokers, shouting their wares—

Liquid-fire-thrower Trust,  
On offer.

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