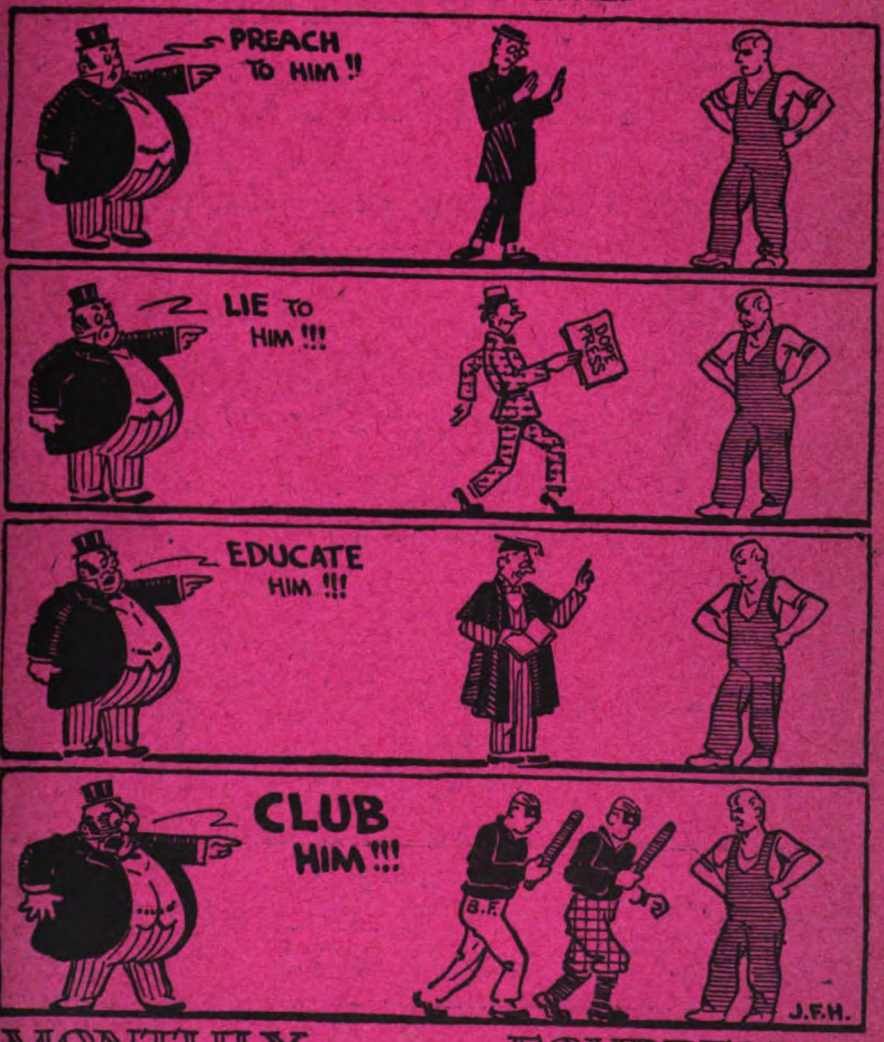
The December 1925

PLEBS

When all else fails —



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The Organ of the National Council of Labour Colleges

THE PLEBS

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COMPLETING OUR 17th ANNUAL VOLUME

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The PLEB POINT of VIEW

THE W.E.A. is surprised and pained. It had thought once the T.U.C. Scheme was put through, that I.W.C.E.ers would be gentlemanly enough to refrain from propagating their principles, and from pointing out, to Trade Unionists and others, the difference between those principles and those of the W.E.A. It had seen, during the last two or three years, Union after Union giving its support to the National Council of Labour Colleges; so, naturally, it was all in favour of a truce being called. It is correspondingly cross now that, as is abundantly clear, the truce is not on.

We trust we shall not be deemed guilty of impugning the W.E.A.'s "good faith" if we venture to suggest that there is more than a suspicion of insincerity about all this indignation.

What the T.U.C. Scheme Said

For months before the Scheme was finally approved by Congress, The PLEBS and various N.C.L.C. speakers and writers—including at least one prominent member of the General Council of the T.U.C.—had made it clear that they intended to take full advantage of Paragraph 7 of the Scheme, which expressly stated that "the rights of criticism or propaganda of the separate organisations" were not to be interfered with. Even though the W.E.A. never heard of these declarations, its representatives, one presumed, read the Scheme before attaching their signatures to it. It is a little unconvincing to express surprise now at the fact that other parties to the Scheme should persist in doing what the Scheme expressly allows. And when one remembers further that the N.C.L.C. has to depend entirely on the support it can win from Trade Unions by the open advocacy of its educational principles, while the W.E.A., by reason of the large proportion of its income derived from State and University grants, is not so dependent, one feels inclined to recall that there are none so smugly virtuous as those who can well afford to be.

We want heartily to congratulate the General Secretary of the N.C.L.C. on his share in a correspondence which has appeared recently in the columns of *Education*, the official organ of the Association of Education Committees—the official organ, that is, of the official viewpoint on education. For the benefit of the majority of our readers, who will not have seen the correspondence, we propose to summarise some of its main points here.

"Official" Educationists and the T.U.C. Scheme

It arose out of an editorial article which expressed some anxiety

about "the agreement arrived at a week or two ago between the W.E.A. and other bodies interested in Adult Education and the Trades Union Congress." The W.E.A., the article continued :—

> has been by its constitution non-political; in the new agreement one of the objects specified is the "emancipation of the worker." This may be, as it was called, "rhetorical flourish," but there are dangerous possibilities which Local Education Authorities will watch carefully.

In other words, Local Education Authorities are given a hint that "the emancipation of the worker" is not one of the educational aims for which State aid is granted.

The General Secretary of the N.C.L.C. promptly wrote to *Education*, confirming the statement that the emancipation (social and industrial) of the worker, so far from being a "rhetorical flourish," was the specific object of the T.U.C. Scheme; and pointing out that the W.E.A., in common with the other parties to the Scheme, had not merely accepted that object, but must embody it in their own objects and statement of policy. He also outlined the N.C.L.C. point of view; viz., that the support of Education Authorities would not be forthcoming for education designed to assist working-class emancipation, and that the fact that, hitherto, the W.E.A. had received such support was sufficient evidence that it did not provide education of this kind.

"*Sound Educational Lines*"

The General Secretary of the W.E.A., Mr. J. M. Mactavish, then wrote on behalf of his Association to ask for space in the following issue to reply to "Mr. Millar's misleading statements." And a week later letters appeared from Mr. Pugh, Chairman of the General Council, and Professor A. D. Lindsay, of Balliol College, Oxford. Mr. Pugh opened by stating that—

> the General Council is perfectly well aware of the conditions under which grants are made by the Board of Education and educational authorities, and it is certainly the intention to develop its Scheme on sound educational lines.

He went on to characterise Mr. Millar's letter as "hardly evidence of that good faith which must be observed by all the bodies concerned if the agreement is to serve the purpose for which it is intended."

Professor Lindsay, while granting that Mr. Millar had a perfect right to "explain the intentions of the N.C.L.C." in entering the T.U.C. Scheme, "and the interpretation they put upon it," declared that he "had no call whatever" to speak for the other parties to the Scheme (who presumably reserved the right to put their own interpretation upon it). "The W.E.A.," Prof. Lindsay wrote, "would not for a moment agree that the T.U.C. has declared for 'Education against Capitalism.'"

One understands Prof. Lindsay's anxiety, on behalf of the W.E.A., to repudiate the N.C.L.C. "interpretation" of the object of the T.U.C. Scheme, when one turns to an editorial article appearing in the same issue as his letter. That article quotes the object of the Scheme, defines it as "working-class education, directed towards political ends," and reiterates its previous argument—that the granting of public funds "for aid or full maintenance" of educational schemes of this kind is a matter which "gives rise to concern." "We regret," said the writer: –

> that in a matter of so far-reaching consequence there should have emerged even the possibility of misunderstanding among the signatories to the Scheme as to the real meaning of the statement of its objects, or as to the bearing of this unfortunate wording on the financial relation of the Scheme with the public purse.

Rhetoric—or Real Business?

Mr. Millar's reply to Mr. Pugh and Prof. Lindsay pointed out that "education for social and industrial emancipation" was the avowed object of the T.U.C. Scheme; and declared that "only a rash man would suggest to Congress that that phrase was a mere 'rhetorical flourish.'" He further stated that the N.C.L.C. had, as required by the conditions of the Scheme, altered its objects and statements of policy to include that particular phrase; and mentioned that he had been reliably informed that the W.E.A. had also done so. He concluded by pointing out that, despite Mr. Mactavish's promise, there had been no official reply from the W.E.A. to his first letter.

Mr. Mactavish obliged a week later. He "does not regard either of Mr. Millar's letters as being of sufficient importance to convene a meeting of my Committee in order to provide him with the kind of official reply for which he seems to crave." He is "not in the slightest degree interested in Mr. Millar's interpretation of the Agreement"; and he does not "intend to assist him in his efforts to win either publicity or notoriety for the school of educational doctrine that he represents." Finally, "the W.E.A. will never agree to using education as a means towards prostituting workers' minds in the interest of any dogma or doctrine . . . the gospel of Matthew or Marx."

In the same issue Prof. Lindsay explained that the W.E.A. could—

> agree to help people in the work of securing 'social and industrial emancipation' without being in the least committed to what 'social and industrial emancipation' is. . . . We are indeed committed to the view that education alone will help us all to understand in what 'social and industrial emancipation' consists.

To which Millar replied, in our view very justly, that the point at issue was not his interpretation of the phrase, but the interpretation

placed upon it by the Trade Union movement. We suggest, indeed, that the time is opportune for a statement by the General Council embodying its interpretation of the objects of the Scheme. Is it, or is it not, out for Education as a weapon in the working-class struggle against capitalism? Does it, or does it not, stand for educational institutions controlled by workers for workers; or is it content to make use of such "spare parts" of the educational machinery of the capitalist State as the governing class permits it to do?

"*A Harmless Formula*"

That the W.E.A. has not in any way altered the educational policy it previously stood for is clear from the letters we have quoted above; and also from a report in the *Times Educational Supplement* (Nov. 14th) of a conference between representatives of Local Authorities and of the London County Council, on the one hand, and Prof. Lindsay and Mr. Mactavish, representing the W.E.A., and Mr. Pugh, chairman of the General Council, on the other. What the *Times* calls the "unhappy wording" of the objects of the T.U.C. Scheme had led to a desire, on the part of Local Education Authorities, for some "reassurance" as to the more "sinister interpretations" which might be put upon the phrase, "social and industrial emancipation of the workers." Prof. Lindsay essayed to do the reassuring. He tried (though, the *Times* thinks, rather unsuccessfully) to convince his hearers that "the objectionable words . . . constitute a harmless formula in which each of the parties can insert its own 'known quantities.' . . ."

And he went further. Not only is the W.E.A. unwilling to give up the grants made by Local Authorities; but it is willing—so he declared—to pay the price by admitting the right of Local Authorities, "under the circumstances," to be "effectively consulted" as to the lectures, subjects, and curricula of W.E.A. classes aided or maintained by them, and "to be informed by their own visitors as to the nature of the work which is the subject of their financial aid."

The issue, then, is perfectly clear—Independent Working-Class Education, carried on entirely under working-class auspices, and with working-class aims; or Education dependent upon governing-class support, and carried on under governing-class supervision.

Which does the British Trade Union Movement stand for?

No less a personage than the President of the Board of Education (Lord Eustace Percy) has been drawn into the controversy. Speaking in London recently he characterised the educational aims and

policy of the National Council of Labour Colleges as "wrong, dangerous, and poisonous." Said he :—

> Any man who could not study the social sciences with a free mind and devote himself to the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, had better devote himself to less exciting subjects, such as literature or metaphysics. There was a tendency to-day to believe that history must only be studied from the point of view of economics and industry; that all down the ages it was the economic conditions which must be studied.
>
> It was a degraded view of humanity to believe that the poorest had no interest but that of livelihood. . . . It meant not regarding the economic conditions as the terribly limited factor of man's activities, but the be-all and end-all of human existence and human progress.
>
> That was why emphasis on industrial and economic history was so degrading. The point of view from which to study history was that of love of mankind.

Comment on this would be superfluous.

J. F. H.

"PLEBS" QUERIES

What will the Industrial Alliance achieve?

THE Industrial Alliance seems likely to become an accomplished fact in the spring of 1926. The constitution has been hammered into its final form. The unions provisionally allied are now to take steps for final ratification by the members, and to change their rules where that is necessary to conform to the terms of the Alliance. Until that has been done the Alliance cannot take its place as a part of our trade union machinery. But the necessary authority has already been given in some cases, and the preliminary consultations within

the unions on the draft constitution justify the belief that most, if not all, the unions involved will do the same.

It is, therefore, well that we should examine dispassionately this new development and attempt to assess its significance in the class struggle.

The Alliance is to consist of four great groups of unions: (1) mining, (2) metal, (3) transport, (4) power production and distribution. All the unions in the respective groups will not be in the Alliance. The best known exception is the National Union of Railwaymen, which has withdrawn from the discussions. But it is nevertheless the fact that the prospective affiliations are so comprehensive that the Alliance could paralyse the whole of the industry of the country.

It must not, of course, be assumed that the main purpose of the Alliance is to rely on the partial or general strike. The constitution sets out five ways in which assistance may be given to a union in dispute: (1) negotiation, (2) financial help, (3) partial sympathetic action, (4) sympathetic action by stages, (5) complete sympathetic action. But the fact that will dominate any crisis in which the allied unions may be plunged will be the paralysing economic power of the Alliance. The *existence* of the organisation with power to take steps 3, 4 or 5 will tend to make their use unnecessary.

It is worth noting, too, that that power may be as effectively used at one part of the year as another, and in a time of falling trade as well as another. A strike depends for its effectiveness upon the consequences entailed upon the employing class. It is often the case that the two sides in a dispute manœuvre, one to get the crisis in the busy season, and the other to get it in the slack season. But the busy time is not in the same season in every industry, and the Alliance brings together industries that cross each other in this respect. This powerful group, therefore, could direct its forces against its enemies with equal effect at any time of the year. Again, while a union might hesitate to face a conflict alone in a period of falling trade, a joint paralysing movement would be a very different proposition—for the employing class can never afford to suffer a complete stoppage.

Let there be no mistake, then, as to the power of the Alliance. Turn now to its specific objects as set out in the constitution. The Alliance is intended "to assist any or all of the allied organisations (*a*) to defend hours of labour and wages standards, (*b*) to promote or to defend any vital principle of an industrial character," and, generally, "to take such steps for mutual co-operation on economic and industrial matters as may from time to time be decided upon."

Now it is obvious that the practical value of the Alliance will depend very largely on the interpretation of these objects. The

Alliance is definitely to operate, where necessary, to prevent any worsening of conditions, but how far will it be available for improving them? What is meant by promoting a vital principle of an industrial character? Would that include an increase of wages or a reduction of hours?

It could, and I think should, be held that an attempt to improve workers' wages and conditions is promoting a vital principle, on the ground that higher wages and more leisure are the immediate aims of the trade union movement. But it does not require much casuistry to contend that "promoting a principle" means attempting to establish something which has not hitherto been recognised. On this point, it is noteworthy that the original draft of the constitution included "securing an advancement of the standard of living" as one of the objects of the Alliance. That is not in the final form. It would, therefore, appear that some at least of the parties to the Alliance think of it purely as a defensive organisation. On the other hand, the lordly vagueness of the phrasing may simply be due to fogginess.

Look, too, at the general aim: "To take such steps for mutual co-operation on economic and industrial matters as may from time to time be decided upon." That is wide enough to cover defensive and offensive action on an enormous range of matters, but it seems to be intended to refer to movements initiated by the Alliance, and not to movements initiated by one of the allied unions in its own industry.

The lack of precision in the statement of objects makes one thing clear, at any rate. *The extent to which the Alliance may be used to improve the workers' position depends on the views of the people elected to decide.* That power will rest entirely with the Executive Council of the Alliance, which will be made up of representatives appointed from each of the allied unions, the smallest union appointing one and the largest (over 50,000 members) four.

How complete is the power of the Executive may be gathered from an examination of the procedure laid down for dealing with a dispute.

When any allied organisation is involved in a dispute and requires the assistance of the Alliance, it must report to the Executive, which will decide whether the circumstances warrant action. If it should decide in the affirmative it must within fourteen days call a General Conference of the allied unions, and the final decision to give assistance will lie with that Conference.

But there is no provision for appeal against a negative decision by the Executive Council. So that that body may give the narrowest interpretation to the "objects" without any immediate redress. The personnel of the Council is therefore all-important from the point of view of determining the scope of the Alliance.

We have now dealt with the methods and objects of the Alliance. While these are important, there is a third element in the constitution which is, I think, by far the most significant. It is contained in clause 6, section (*c*), which reads :—

" Upon the General Conference sanctioning assistance (to a union in dispute), the conduct of the movement shall then pass into the control of the Executive Council, who shall work in consultation with the union or unions involved, and shall keep the allied organisations fully informed, and shall, as necessity arises, call together the General Conference and report."

Here is a definite surrender of the hitherto jealously guarded autonomy of the unions. Never before has this been conceded as an established principle outside any one industry. Unions within a particular industry have had disputes conducted by a federation executive (*e.g.*, the mining unions and the building unions) when the disputes involved the industry nationally ; but in the Alliance authority is delegated to a body outside the industry primarily concerned, and that authority exists even if the union in dispute is the only one on strike.

It will be remembered that when the old loose Triple Alliance of miners, transport workers and railwaymen was convoked during the mining dispute of 1921, a claim was made that the miners' allies should have a voice in determining policy. Herbert Smith's reply was that they must " get on t' field " first. In the new Alliance authority will not depend on the allies first coming out.

Clause 8 provides that if terms are obtained which the Executive Council regards as acceptable, after fullest consultation with the union on whose behalf assistance has been rendered, the terms shall be reported to the General Conference for ratification.

Clause 9 has the effect of emphasising the change involved. It declares that the conditions of membership of the Alliance shall involve the allied organisations in definitely undertaking, notwithstanding anything in their agreements or constitutions to the contrary, to act as directed by the General Conference.

Very definitely then the Alliance means a big and significant surrender of autonomy by the Allied unions—an important forward step.

So far we have considered the Alliance as a piece of machinery standing by itself. But we cannot overlook, if we are to get the thing in true perspective, its relation to the Trades Union Congress. The constitution of the Alliance pays a sort of casual homage to that body, for among the duties of the Executive Council is that it " shall keep the General Council of the Trades Union Congress informed of all developments," and then, patronisingly, " where necessity arises " endeavour to secure the Council's co-operation—" the co-ordination of the whole trade union movement."

The General Council cannot complain that its powers are usurped, because that Council at present has not the powers which the allied unions will confer on the Alliance. That there is no apparent conflict is evident from the fact that this year's Chairman of the General Council, Mr. Arthur Pugh, was party to the Alliance as general secretary of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, which body was responsible for the actual terms of the objects of the Alliance.

But it should be observed that motions to give extended power to the General Council have been before several recent Congresses—and have been turned down with the help, considerable if not decisive, of some of the unions now to join the Alliance !

The subject was again before Congress at Scarborough last September, on a motion which would have given the Council power to levy all affiliated members, to call for a stoppage of work in order to assist a trade union defending a vital principle, to arrange with the C.W.S. to distribute food in the event of a strike, and to secure alterations in the unions' rules to regularise these changes. The proposals were referred to the General Council with instructions to consider them and submit its conclusions to a conference of union executives. Presumably the General Council is considering the matter, and presently will report to such a conference.

How does the formation of the Alliance affect that situation ? Unions prepared to transfer control to the Alliance Executive can no longer object on principle to do that to the General Council. But if the proposed powers are conceded to the major body, the Alliance becomes merely a matter of historical interest, for any dispute affecting any constituent of the Alliance might find the Alliance Executive and the General Council in jealous rivalry, and the minor body would obviously have to yield to the major. Or we might have the awkward situation that the Alliance Executive turned down the call for help while the General Council endorsed it, and a union whose representative on the Alliance Executive voted against help might be required by the General Council to give it.

Plainly, then, either the Alliance must prove a decisive obstacle to the General Council getting extended powers or the Alliance must pass on its torch to the Council. Which will happen no one can tell. At least one union foresaw something of this situation, for the Executive of the United Patternmakers' Association recently decided to take no action about joining the Alliance until the General Council had formulated a policy as directed at Scarborough.

It seems to me inevitable that the powers of the General Council will be extended. It is equally inevitable that the Alliance is but a temporary phase of trade union development. So far as it

goes, however, it shows how far we have travelled towards working class unity from the days of craft exclusiveness.

And now let me remind the reader that the Alliance constitution was not in existence on Red Friday.

Nor did the constitution of the Trades Union Congress pretend to give authority to do what was then done.

But the whole trade union movement at that time sprang in full battle array alongside the miners. Tremendous and unprecedented power was placed in the hands of the General Council willingly and promptly.

The moral of this is not that the formal concession of new powers is unnecessary, but that the vital thing is the spirit of the movement. The trade union movement will find a way to act when it is roused; if it does not want to act no machinery in the world will be of much use. Let us get on with perfecting our machinery, but let us at the same time promote the class consciousness which will give life to the machine.

GEORGE THOMAS.

WHY the WORKERS should study HISTORY

The publication of our new textbook, "An Outline of European History," lends especial interest to this translation, by Eden and Cedar Paul, of the introductory chapter of Pokroffsky's "Outline of Russian History." We think Plebs will agree that it is at once a masterly summary, in the simplest language, of the fundamental forces of history, and a convincing plea for the study of history by the workers. The concluding portion will be published next month.

WHY is it necessary to study the past? For what reason need we concern ourselves with things that happened ten, a hundred, a thousand, or a myriad years ago? Should we not do better to concentrate our attention upon what is going on to-day, upon what is happening around us at this moment, upon the things on which our lives actually depend?

Why must we study the Past?

We study the past in order that we may understand what is happening to-day. In this world of ours everything develops, everything changes. A hundred million years ago the earth was a red-hot sphere, surrounded by incandescent vapour. There was not, nor could there be, any life upon it. Ten million

years ago, life had already appeared in the world. A few million years ago, vegetation had already spread over the earth ; there were vaſt foreſts, and many kinds of animals, both in the waters and on dry land. That world was very different from the one we know to-day, but nevertheless our world has developed out of that one by a long series of continuous changes. Exiſting plants and animals are the descendants of those that lived millions of years ago.

How did all this happen ? Not by chance, but in accordance with definite laws. If, however, we confine ourselves to the ſtudy of living forms as we know them to-day, we shall fail to discover these laws, shall fail to perceive the regularity of these changes. Until people had ſtudied the diſtant paſt of the earth, and until they had discovered the fossil remains of old-time animals and plants, learned men used to believe that the world had from the firſt been exactly what it is now, and that it had been created all in a moment. As recently as one hundred years ago, the inveſtigators who ventured to maintain the contrary opinion were derided. The innovators were proclaiming what now seems to us a matter of course, that life on the earth developed gradually, and in the course of an immense number of years.

Study of the fossilised remains of animal and vegetable life, preserved for hundreds of centuries until our own day, has shown how these changes took place. The legend that the world had been created in seven days was blown to smithereens. Nowadays no one, or at any rate no one who has had the firſt elements of an education, will believe you if you tell him that plants and animals have always been like those we see around us. Every one who can read knows, and every town dweller can learn for himself in our museums, that the animals and plants of earlier times are different from those that now exiſt, that the world has undergone vaſt changes in the course of the ages, that it is ſtill changing, and that it will continue to change. For change is the law of nature.

But the doctrine that the world is changeless and that it was created all in a moment perſiſted for a long time in the minds of the learned as well as the unlearned—and for a good reason, quite apart from lack of knowledge. This doctrine was profitable to a great many people. If everything in the world is unchangeable, then there can be no change in human society. It, likewise, was created once for all, exactly in its present form, and will continue as it is, world without end. So we were taught in the old days. But why was it expedient for people to think that human society would always be the same as it is now ? Because this theory is advantageous to every one who enjoys special privileges. Those in whose hands power and wealth were

Why was it neceſsary to teach that the Earth and its Inhabitants do not change ?

concentrated, wanted to believe that things must always be as they then were; that wealth and knowledge would always be reserved for an upper class, which the workers and peasants would continue for all time to serve. That was why they tried to convince themselves, and above all to convince their subordinates, the workers and peasants, that things must be so, and that no change was possible.

Just as a knowledge of the past of the earth and a knowledge of the past forms of animal and vegetable life (the sciences of geology and paleontology) have made an end of the fable that the world was created in a moment and does not change, so history and the study of ancient buildings and encampments and other relics of our human past (the science of archeology) have made an end of another fable; that human society has always been and must always be exactly what it now is. Man changes and will continue to change, like everything else. A social system comes into being. After a time, it passes away, and a new social system takes its place. The final end of these changes is beyond our foretelling or foreseeing; but if we study the changes that have occurred in the course of decades and centuries we shall gain some understanding of the laws of social change. Even though we cannot represent to ourselves the exact form human society will assume several thousand years hence, we can nevertheless learn the general trend that will be followed in the course of this period.

Knowledge of the Past gives Power over the Future

Now, he who can foresee the future, can control the future; for, if we foresee the future, we can get ready for it, we can take measures that will enable us to avoid future misfortunes and to turn to the best account whatever advantages the future may have to offer. Knowledge gives foresight, and foresight gives power of control. *A knowledge of the past gives us power over the future.*

That is why we must study the past.

But although we can only learn the laws of social change by studying social changes as they occur down the ages, this does not mean that we must begin our study at a very remote period and work forwards. We can, if we prefer, take the opposite course. And we find that we learn the laws of social change more readily by working backwards from our own time.

Consider what is happening now. To-day, throughout the world, a revolution is in progress. The workers are trying to throw off the yoke of the bourgeoisie. They are trying to free themselves from the tryanny of the exploiters. In other words, they are trying to overthrow the rule of those who live at the workers' expense, who compel the workers to toil as hard as possible for as little pay as

possible, themselves pocketing the difference between the value of what the workers produce on the one hand, and the cost of the workers' wages on the other. The question now arises whether exploitation is peculiar to our own day, and whether in former times the learned and the rich lived in some other way than by exploiting the common people. The answer is that there has always been exploitation. Before the development of the existing form of capitalist society, with its factories, workshops, banks, railways, and so on, there was feudal society and there was serfdom. Under the feudal regime, there were no manufacturers like those of to-day, who take from the workers all that these produce, paying them a subsistence wage. There were landowners who took from the peasants (the serfs) part of the fruit of their labour, paying them nothing at all. Were there then risings of the exploited against the exploiters? Were there then revolutions like those of our own time? Yes, there were risings, and attempted revolutions; but they were always unsuccessful. Why? Because the peasants could not combine, were not capable of organisation, could not form themselves into a united whole which would act in accordance with a plan common to all its members. Why could not the peasants unite? Because peasants work each man for himself, rarely helping one another.

Earlier Forms of Exploitation

Peasant Revolts

When, under more modern conditions, peasants and small-holders produce for the market, each disposes independently of the produce of his own small plot of land, in rivalry with his neighbours. The less vegetables and grain there are in the market, the higher the price they can command. The more produce there is, the less can each peasant get for what he brings to market. Owing to this rivalry, the peasants or small-holders are slow to learn that they must join hands, that they must enter into alliance. They fail to understand the need for solidarity.

The industrial workers, on the other hand, are always rubbing shoulders in factory, workshop, and mine; they are continually helping one another at their labours. Every one of them has need of all his mates; they must practise mutual aid. Thus, among the industrial workers, there arises a solidarity of which the peasants know nothing. That is why the workers become organised more readily and more effectively than the peasants. That is why working-class revolutionary movements are more vigorous, more consolidated, than the peasant risings of old days. The peasants could not get the better of their exploiters. Peasant revolts were always unsuccessful. The peasants were never able to achieve the conquest of power as the workers have done in Russia, one of the largest countries in

Working-class Revolutions

the world, and as they are on the way to achieve power in many other European countries.

Thus, by observing what happens to-day, and by comparing it with what used to happen, we learn the laws of historical change, and we perceive that history is determined by people's occupations. We see that historical development varies according as this or that class in society is making history. We see that when the great mass of the population consisted of peasants, history took a different course from that which it takes to-day when the industrial workers are the chief motive forces of historical development.

History as the development of the Class War; Classes and the Method of Production; Historical Materialism

How did these classes come into existence? Why, in old days, was production in the hands of the peasants? Why, in those times, were not only wheat and flax and wool produced in the villages where every one worked on his own account, but also footgear and clothing, which were then made by independent craftsmen each of whom worked under his own roof? Why is it that to-day these things are made in great boot factories and clothing factories? The reason is that in former times people did all the work with their own hands. There were scarcely any machines. The only power-driven machines were those driven by water-power or wind-power, such as the old-fashioned flour mills. Of these there were few. But about two hundred years ago, people began to make machines driven by steam-power. Still later, in our own day, came electrically driven machines, internal combustion engines, and so on. In proportion as these power-driven machines developed, came the production of all kinds of things in far larger quantities than before, and far more rapidly. One example will suffice. When raw cotton was cleaned by hand, it took one man a day to clean a pound. Now, when machinery is used, one man can clean a hundred pounds in a day.

With this development of power-driven machinery, it was no longer profitable for a man to work in solitude. Production came to require that a great number of workers should come together to work one machine. Thus large-scale production began; thus factories arose. The owners, the capitalist entrepreneurs, became masters of the situation. Allowing the workers to use the machinery, the capitalists paid a subsistence wage and took the whole product.

Thus originated the class of workers who no longer worked in their own homes, but under another's roof; and no longer worked with their unaided hands or with tools belonging to themselves, but had to use machinery belonging to the capitalist. Thus originated the proletariat. How, then, do we explain he origin of this or that

social class? We explain it as due to the method of production. Formerly, production took place on a small scale, each producer working by himself, and then there was one type of society. Subsequently, the workers came to produce jointly, and then another type of society arose. Fundamentally, the whole process turns upon changes in the method of production, upon economic change.

What compels people to undertake the work of production? The answer to this question is so obvious that we need not waste many words on the matter. Enough to consider what the peasants used to produce in former days, and what the workers produce now in factories and workshops. The peasants produce corn, meat, wool, flax—in a word, all the raw materials needed for making food and clothing. In the factories, these raw materials are worked up into the forms in which they are ready for use. That is the way in which human life is supported. Man undertakes the work of production in order that he may go on living. I need not labour the point, for every child knows as much nowadays. When we say that changes in the method of production underlie historical change, we mean, at bottom, that man's needs, his material necessities, force him to work. He must work to save himself from hunger and cold.

Material needs are the essential urges to human activity, and lie at the root of history. That is why our present explanation of the historical process is called "historical materialism." This interpretation of history was given first of all by that social class which first came to understand the solidarity of the interests of all the workers, and which is the vanguard of contemporary revolution.

Bourgeois and Proletarian Historical Out-Looks

The materialist interpretation of history is its proletarian interpretation. In former times—and to-day in all other lands except Soviet Russia—education being in the hands of the bourgeoisie (that is to say, in the hands of the class which controls the instruments of production, such as factories, workshops, railways, the land, etc., in a word, the class that lives by the exploitation of others), history was interpreted in a different fashion. For instance, all the changes that take place in human society were said to be the outcome of changes occurring in the minds of the holders of power and the owners of wealth. It was generally believed that in olden times people did not ponder why or how this or that social system came into being, but subserviently adapted themselves to the existing order. In those days, consequently, there was no revolution. But after a time people began to criticise the social order; pointed out its defects; suggested to the masses a doubt as to whether the social system was a just one. The masses listened to these agitators and demagogues, and grew mutinous. Such is the bourgeois view of the way in which revolutions occur.

In short, to the bourgeois mind it seems that the historical process is like what goes on in a factory or a shop, where the master thinks and issues his orders, while the workers or the shop-assistants carry them out.

We can easily see that this explanation of history is false. Suppose that matters were not as they are, and as we have described? Suppose that the capitalists did not take away from the workers a large part of what these produce, or paid them the full value of what they produce? Could any agitators induce the working masses to rebel? If it were possible by simple agitation, by the spoken or written word, to bring about a revolt, this could be done in the case of one class just as well as in the case of another. The bourgeoisie could be induced to riot just as easily as the proletariat. Indeed, it would be easier to arouse an insurrectionary movement in the bourgeoisie, seeing that the bourgeois are better educated than the workers, and can therefore be more readily affected by agitational propaganda. Why, then, do we find that the poorest and least educated class is most readily influenced by such agitation, whereas the well educated bourgeoisie is everywhere opposed to revolution and unwilling to listen to agitators? Because the agitation is opposed to bourgeois advantage, because it runs counter to bourgeois material interests. That is why the bourgeoisie, defending its material interests, defending its right to climb upon the backs of the workers, its right to dainty food, good wine, comfortable houses, and so on—that is why the bourgeoisie will not listen to agitators. That is why the capitalists shoot or hang or imprison the agitators who fall into their hands, and that is why they are so vindictive against the workers who try to secure better conditions of life and labour.

Thus the primary driving force of history is the class war; the struggle of the oppressed and exploited, the peasants and the workers, against those who oppress and exploit them, the landlords and the capitalists. Further we have to recognise that material interests constitute the motive force of the class struggle itself; "material interests," in the last analysis, meaning the need for food and fuel, for clothing and shelter. People strive to satisfy their needs, and it is necessary that we should do our utmost to ensure that these needs shall be satisfied as equitably as possible. The aim of the socialists is to ensure that worldly goods shall be distributed to all in proportion to their needs.

This example shows that we not only learn to understand the present by studying the past, but are also enabled to explain the past by studying the present—provided always that we are careful to examine sufficiently long periods of time. If we are to see the historical process as a whole, in all its significance, we must stand aside to contemplate the movement from a little way off.

(*To be concluded.*)

OXFORD: A CLASS-CONSCIOUS UNIVERSITY

The writer of this short study of the Oxford "atmosphere" has, during a term of residence at Ruskin College, had an opportunity for acquiring first-hand knowledge of his subject.

IT is a fond delusion of many minds—even in the Labour Movement—that the historic universities of Oxford and Cambridge are institutions where truth is pursued for its own sake; where learning, freed from any taint of vested interests, is imparted to those fortunate enough to go there. It would astonish these people to know how far from the reality such a view is; how little related to the facts of the case.

To understand a social institution like Oxford University, just as to understand a piece of machinery, it is essential to grasp the function or purpose for which it exists. What then is the function or purpose of Oxford?

Oxford is pre-eminently a University for the training of the leisured and governing class. That is to say its primary object is not so much the pursuit and imparting of learning for its own sake—although some of that is done incidentally—as an institution where the finishing touch is given to a governing class education. This finishing touch consists principally in stamping the students with a definite philosophy; a definite outlook on life, which will not only fit them to take the place of their fathers in the government of the country, but will inspire them with an enthusiasm for the existing order of society.

The method is three-fold. In the first place, in most faculties a place is found for a final course (started at the big public schools) in the classical literature of Greece and Rome—a literature be it noted written by a governing class for a governing class. In the second place, practically the whole of the teaching of the University is coloured with a highly abstract and idealistic philosophy; a philosophy it is true completely divorced from the concrete realities of life such as the workers know them, but one which fits in admirably with the life and continued existence of a special learned and governing class. In the third place, the lecture and tutorial work is influenced by the governing class bias of practically the whole of the teaching staff.

The greatest factor of the three, however, in making Oxford a class-conscious University is undoubtedly the philosophic one;

for Oxford, like the great mediæval Universities, and unlike the modern, is first and foremost a great school of Philosophy where the student is taught to look at life from a definite point of view—a *class* point of view in this case.

Now the basis of this Oxford idealistic philosophy (the term is used in this article in its technical sense, not in the popular sense of a system of thought based on ideals) is two-fold. First the influence of the Greek philosophic classics which still hold the field at Oxford, and secondly modern idealistic philosophy. The first is of course a constant factor, the second a variable one ; for Oxford has its fashions in modern idealistic philosophers, just as it has its fashions in trousers—yesterday Hegel : to-day Kant : to-morrow possibly Bergson. The authorities realise that it matters little what particular system of idealistic thought prevails, so long as it *is* idealistic from the Oxford point of view and harmonises with Greek aristocratic thought. Of course the more abstract it is, the more remote from the work-a-day world, the better ; for these are qualities that help to create just that sense of mental superiority so essential to the continued functioning of a governing class. This is a vital matter. It is no exaggeration to say that in so far as a governing class loses its superiority sentiment, and therefore lacks confidence in its own decisions, in so far will it cease to govern ; for lack of confidence spells vacillation, and vacillation paralysis of action. Conversely, of course, the very abstractness and apparent profundity of this philosophic teaching is invaluable in impressing the mass of the people with the superior knowledge of the governing class.

Now, although a definite study of idealistic philosophy is not, of course, demanded of all students, it is compulsory for all who enter for what is known as the " Greats " schools, either the older classical " Greats," or the Modern Political " Greats," Oxford's supreme faculties. It is highly significant that when the new " Greats " in Economic and Political Science were founded a year or two ago, the authorities demanded that Philosophy be added as a compulsory subject in the new faculty. Obviously it was vital that political students, above all, should have the " right " point of view !

But even with the other faculties, although idealistic philosophy is not demanded, it is, as has been already stated, the basis of most of the teaching ; for Oxford, like the Catholic Church, has long realised the value of mental atmosphere in education. In short, with the possible exception of engineering—idealistic engines have a way of not working in practice—it matters little what group of studies the student takes, the tuition will be coloured by idealism of the orthodox type.

Few studies lend themselves so fittingly as History to this process of teaching with an " atmosphere " ; for in History the

interpretation of facts is almost as important as the facts themselves, and in practice, largely determines the selection of the facts to come under review. It is upon the interpretation, however, rather than on the selection of facts, that Oxford chiefly relies to produce the "right" point of view in the student. Obvious materialistic causes for change are waived aside, and idealistic ones substituted; *e.g.*, the successful attempt of the English Monarchy during the Middle Ages to increase its prestige and economic power at the expense of the baronage, by making the nobility like the peasantry amenable to King's Law, is explained on the grounds of a growing recognition by the King and his advisers of the Christian ideals of equality and justice!

In Modern Literature again, as taught in the English Faculty, the rise of successive schools of thought is, of course, a purely mental process, having little or no connection with economic and social conditions. To admit that conditions determine the character and form of the literature of the time would be impossible at Oxford. Not only would it be out of harmony with the University's philosophy, but such teaching would seriously undermine the cherished belief of the Oxford undergraduate in the necessity of a cultured leisured class to create and maintain the forms of literary culture. To the don, of course, literature is a purely hot-house plant not dependent on common humanity for its life.

A final illustration from the medical school may be given. At Oxford it is possible to hear a lecturer describe with the greatest accuracy of detail the phenomena presented by a particular disease, and from that go on to the physiological causes. To let the subject go at that, however, would be a betrayal of Oxford's philosophic idealism. So he will conclude by suggesting that however satisfactory as a working hypothesis such a purely materialistic explanation is, it is not necessary to accept it as the fundamental one: "to do so would conflict with everything we have learnt in our schools of philosophy."

If this can, and does, happen in the medical schools of the University, it can be imagined how the teaching of such subjects as Politics and Economics are coloured, especially as these subjects directly affect the vested interests of the governing class.

As regards the second factor—the continued study of Greek and Latin classic Literature and History—the value of this study as a means of inculcating class bias is undeniable. In the first place, in England the study of Greek language and literature is practically confined to the governing class public schools; so that a knowledge of this subject hall-marks the student as belonging to that class and in so doing helps to develop in him a class *esprit-de-corps*.

Furthermore, by means of classical studies his mind is diverted from the revolutionary theories and democratic ideals current in modern European literature, and is concentrated instead on the life, ideals and speculations of the leisured and governing classes of classical antiquity. This he is made to feel is a worthier subject for his attention than a similar knowledge of the thoughts and ideals of commonplace humanity in a modern community.

Finally, there is the class bias of practically the whole of the teaching staff, a class bias well exemplified by the sending down a year or two ago of two students for no greater crime than an open acknowledgment of their adhesion to the Communist Party. Of course, no objections are raised to an undergraduate joining or even taking an active part in the Fascist Movement.

To sum up, what part does Oxford play in our present society? What is its definable objective in the political and economic sphere? Briefly, to do for the possessing class what the Labour College Movement aims at doing for the dispossessed class—create an army of educated and thoroughly class-conscious men and women, who in the mass, can be depended on to defend the interests of the class from which they spring. Oxford education, in fact, is the supreme example in this country of class-conscious education.

HAROLD R. HUTCHISON.

WORD TRAPS

A Talk with New Students

TO prevent the workers from thinking clearly is one of the most important tasks of the governing class. That the governing class is in a considerable degree unconscious of the real aims of its activities in the intellectual sphere does not alter the fact.

We all know the part played in this process by the Press and by Education. But we often overlook the point that even single words are used as booby-traps for the unwary worker.

"Error," says the philosopher, Bentham, "is never so difficult to be dislodged as when it has its roots in language." The reason for that is simple. Men think by means of words, and if false meanings are attached to those words, false thinking is the inevitable result. In capitalism to-day this process of perverting the meanings of words is one of the most flourishing of "industries." In addition to that, it should be noted that words have had attached to them *class* meanings. For example, to the worker Socialism may stand

for his emancipation. To the aristocracy, on the other hand, it may well mean "the end of all things."

Take the simple word "nationalisation." So skilful have the perverters of words been that instead of bringing the Post Office to the mind of the Tory working man, the word conjures up pictures of the nationalisation of women.

Recently there stood in the municipal elections hundreds of candidates described as "Municipal Reformers." Nothing could sound nicer than that, for every Labour man or woman is a Municipal Reformer. The fact remains, however, that Labour opposed these candidates because it knows the phrase "Municipal Reformer" and word "Progressive" are booby-traps.

"Capital is wealth used to produce more wealth," say the defenders of the existing order. Surely no one can then talk about attacking such an excellent thing as capital. Says the Labour College student —the Marxist, "Capital is wealth used to produce more wealth with a view to private profit (or exploitation)." Quite a different story!

"Defending the community against the miners" contains another favourite booby-trap—the word "community." The people of Great Britain are as much, or as little a community, as are rabbits and weasels that inhabit the same hillside. When the governing class speaks of acting in the interests of the community, it means acting in its own interests. To avow it, however, is another matter, as honesty in these cases is the worst policy.

Everyone recalls how the Great War, in reality a bloodthirsty struggle between rival Imperialisms, was described as "a war to end war," "a war for freedom," and so on. It is obvious, therefore, that one of the essential qualifications of the intellectuals required by the governing class is a capacity for finding nice names for nasty things and nasty names for nice things.

Other common booby-traps are words like "education," "propaganda," "impartiality," "evolution," "democracy," "the search for truth."

One of the main jobs of Independent Working Class Education is to put the workers wise against booby-traps and their makers.

J. P. M. Millar.

In his new book, "Where is Britain Going?" (to be published shortly by Allen & Unwin) Trotsky writes:—

> "An explanation of the historical significance of the Revolution of the 17th century and of the revolutionary content of Chartism is one of the most important obligations laid upon British Marxists."

See—for both—pp. 32 and 86-88 of the new Plebs Textbook.

THIS VIEW—AND THAT

There is a working-class point of view in history, and a ruling-class point of view. The latter is taught in the schools. Below we give, side by side, two or three extracts dealing with events of the French Revolution from "The Building of the Modern World: IV, Since 1789" by J. A. Brendon, a school textbook just published, and from the new PLEBS *textbook, "An Outline History of Europe." We leave it to our readers to guess which is which! Next month we hope to give a few parallel extracts dealing with more modern times.*

The Taking of the Bastille

Events in Paris soon disturbed the *peaceful progress of reform*. Early in July it was noised abroad that the king had mobilised troops with a view to dissolving the Assembly. *Agitators* also declared that he had given orders for guns to be mounted on the Bastille, the great prison-fortress of Paris. . . . On July 14th, a Parisian *mob*, excited by these reports, attacked the Bastille. . . . *The mob*, having demolished the fortress and massacred its defenders, paraded the streets in triumph, urging others to "deeds of patriotism."

The Taking of the Bastille

Under the influence of his Austrian Queen, Marie Antoinette, the king had assented to a new plan—the summoning of Marshal Broglie to Paris with a force of loyal soldiers sufficient to dragoon the city. . . . Then, on July 14th, the people of Paris . . . took action which defeated him. A partly armed crowd stormed the prison and fortress of the Bastille, which dominated Paris. This was no mere riot; it was a sign that power was passing from the king to the Assembly. . . . It was also a signal to the countryside.

The March to Versailles

During the autumn of 1789 . . . there was a scarcity of bread in Paris. *Agitators* gave out that the scarcity was due to the action of the king. . . . So was *engineered* the episode of Oct. 5th. On that day a great concourse of people marched on Versailles to demand bread of the king. . . . Having arrived at Versailles, *the mob* burst into the palace and demanded that the royal family should return with them to the capital.

The March to Versailles

The king—or perhaps, one should say the court, for the king was only an inert lump pulled to and fro—resisted and declined to sign [the new Constitution]. Once again Paris saved the situation. The districts, which had been called together for the elections, had remained as a sort of mass Vigilance Committee. . . . Inspired by a call from the most advanced district, the Cordeliers, led by a lawyer named Danton, the women of Paris first and then the districts marched on Versailles. . . . The king was brought to Paris, half a prisoner, and signed the Declaration.

August, 1792

The insurrection of August 10th was organised by a few *extremists* who, led by Danton, had taken possession of the City Hall, turned out the properly appointed mayor and council, and assumed the government of Paris. Behind them stood *the mob*. . . . Under pressure from the *usurping* Commune, etc., etc. . . .

August, 1792

Once again it was the Paris sections which moved. They turned out the old municipality, and under the leadership of Danton, Marat, and other Jacobins formed a new organisation, the Commune, attacked the royal palace of the Tuileries, and captured it on August 10th after a fierce struggle. For a short while the people were in direct control.

Marat

In his own profession, that of medicine, Marat was a distinguished scholar. But he was diseased in body, and diseased in mind; and his madness, which took the form of a wild craving for blood, gave him an extraordinary power of swaying mobs. In the summer of 1793, a beautiful and highminded girl, Charlotte Corday . . . stabbed the tyrant to the heart.

Bonaparte

Bonaparte, at the head of a body of troops, received *the mob* with volley after volley of grape shot. This was a novel way of treating Parisians. The *rabble* fled precipitately. . . .

Marat

. . . a doctor of great acuteness and devotion, but embittered. . .

Bonaparte

. . . The active period of the Revolution was over. Executive power was placed in the hands of a strong military man who would use a "whiff of grapeshot" against any Jacobins, and could establish and extend the power of the new [bourgeois] France against its semi-feudal enemies.

The I.F.T.U. Summer School at Brunnsvik, Sweden

Comrade Harry Short (N.U.R. and N.U.D.A.W.) of Birkenhead, one of the N.C.L.C. students who attended the I.F.T.U. Summer School at Brunnsvik, Sweden, last August, sends us some notes on the lectures delivered at the School.

THE two languages used at the school were German and English. The translators were not all that could be desired but remembering (1) that the translator was dealing with a subject he was unfamiliar with (such as a lecturer in psychology translating three lectures in economics and trying to find equivalents in English for definitions of words like capital, wealth—providing no end of discussion) and (2) that the interpreters, who were Swedes, were translating from one foreign language into another—they were exceedingly good.

The first lecture on "The Swedish Labour Movement" was by comrade Gunnar Hirdman. The chief characteristic of Sweden, he said, is its huge forest-lands. Only 12% of the land is cultivated, yet agriculture is the chief occupation. Since the decline of the guild system in the 30's and 40's of the last century industrialism has been growing slowly, having the following effect: Percentage of workpeople in agriculture 1870, 72%; 1880, 67%; 1900, 61%; 1910, 48%; 1917, 43%.

DEVELOPMENT OF INDUSTRY IN SWEDEN.

Year.	Factories.	Workpeople.
1861	2,400	28,000
1895	5,000	140,000
1912	11,700	310,000
1922	11,700	326,000

The Trade Union movement began about 1870. Later you had the formation of National Unions, then in 1898 a Federation of Unions was established having last December a membership of 360,337. While we in England are struggling to keep one daily paper alive, in Sweden the Labour Movement is responsible for 27 daily newspapers.

Dealing with workers' education in

Sweden, a comparison was made about the formation of the English W.E.A. and the Swedish Workers' Educational Society (the A.B.F.). The difference, the lecturer pointed out. was that the former body was established by individuals on the outside, while the Swedish society was brought into being by the Labour Movement. Continually while dealing with education did he mention the W.E.A. (England) so that N.C.L.C. students pointed out that he was mentioning the smaller of two workers' educational bodies in England. Translating his lecture into German I heard Comrade Hirdman saying that there was a body in England besides the W.E.A. which gave education to the workers, but the education was of a Communist character. We challenged this statement at once, not because we were frightened at being bracketed with the C.P., but that we wanted the students of other countries to know the actual position. We pointed out (1) that the C.P.G.B. had party training classes of their own and (2) that over a million trade unionists supported the N.C.L.C., whereas the W.E.A. had not the support of half a million; he withdrew his statement.

Next day, Falkenburg (ex-Cabinet Minister, Germany) gave us two lectures on "The Labour Movement in Germany."

On Wednesday and Thursday the Prime Minister of Sweden, Comrade Sandler, gave a series of lectures—four in all, on "Socialism in Sweden." After explaining the social democratic programme dealing with socialisation he mentioned the work before the Commission appointed to deal with socialisation. "The task the Commission was given was to investigate the suitability of, and the conditions for a transference to social ownership or under social control of those natural resources and means of production which are of greater importance for the country's economy and the population's welfare, or which for other reasons should be in the hands of a social organ." The basic conclusion of this commission is seemingly that "the very basis for a rational state business activity is to distinguish between the state's political administration and its financial undertakings." State railways should therefore be organised as an independent public enterprise owned exclusively by the State. (The mathematics of gradualness, very nice for the lecture room but not so nice for the workers, just listen) "The wages (of State employees) therefore should be established principally by the same methods which are in practice in private economic life." (No Poplarism about them.)

On Friday we visited an iron mine at Grangesburg, and in the evening Comrade Bowen (General Council of T.U.C.) gave a lecture on "British Trade Unionism." Dealing with the Minority Movement he said it was more vocal than numerical and he thought possibly more destructive than creative. Dealing with the increased power of the General Council he welcomed it as a sign of the times.

"The Workers' Movement in Denmark" was dealt with by Comrade Bramsnes, Finance Minister of Denmark, on Saturday morning. The workers' movement—at first illegal—began about 1870. The trade unions

through their activity gained a lawful basis and in 1899 the membership stood at 100,000; to-day the membership is 300,000. The political movement is an independent organisation based on individual membership. The relationship between the industrial and political movements is, that both organisations elect several of their members on to the controlling body of the other organisation. A socialist minority is in office at the present time.

Of the remaining lectures, those by Spencer Miller (America) and Graf (Germany) were of most interest. Spencer Miller, on the 12th, 13th and 14th of August, gave us a series of three lectures on American History, the trade union and educational movement. The War of Independence and the Civil War were generally attributed to "a love of freedom and liberty animating the people" (though of the War of Independence the lecturer said "This change was not a thing carried out by all people being conscious of it, but by a small conscious minority"). Dealing with the earlier part of the 20th century the lecturer said that with President Roosevelt (I am sure this will be new to PLEBS readers) you had the start of the spirit for social good!

With regard to the American workers' education movement, Mr. Miller remarked that "some of the people bringing about this movement did not know entirely where they were going." I felt when the lectures had finished that I had been listening to a very capable exponent of Liberalism.

Graf's lectures suffered from unsatisfactory translation. "Socialism," said Comrade Graf, "is a new form of distributing the wealth among the people and for attaining that aim you must pass over the means of production from individuals to society." To-day we are facing new forms of capitalism, probably we shall have an agricultural capitalism. It is possible that in the future, what are now considered backward countries (in the East) will give a lead to the workers of the world, and the workers of Europe will recede into the background. To conclude he said "Education must be carried on, and that education must have for its purpose the preparing of the workers for taking on the task of overthrowing capitalism."

H. SHORT.

A WORD to LITERATURE SECRETARIES

SINCE the beginning of the class "season" the circulation of The PLEBS is steadily increasing. Not only are the already existing colleges ordering larger numbers, but we have opened up in more than thirty new centres within the last three months. This means that many new comrades are starting in on the job of literature secretary, so perhaps a few words about the keeping of accounts—by way of postscript to "The M.S.M.'s" article last month—may not come amiss. Don't think a night-class in book-keeping is necessary, or that the difficulties of "double entry" have to be grappled with. All that you need to do is to keep a full record of mags and books received and money paid—together with the notes, etc., that we send out.

Some people get the wind up when they are taking the responsibility for money owing, and perhaps this is the explanation for *invoices* being taken for bills. Look in the dictionary (PLEBS sells a good one for 1s. 9d.) and you'll find that an invoice is "a list of goods with the prices annexed." We send an invoice with every book and mag. we send out of the office, and if you enter, on one side of a note book, a full list of all invoices sent to you, you will have a full record of all goods we have supplied. When you send us cash along (and the sooner the better for us) we let you have a *receipt*, and when you are obliged to send us books or mags back we let you have a *credit note*. Enter these two up on the opposite side to invoices—on the one side you will have got a full account of

money due to us, and on the other a full account of what is paid off. At the end of each month reckon up both columns. Maybe you'll find there is something still owing, or maybe the balance will be the other way and you'll find that you have paid in more cash than the amount of goods we have sent. In the first case, you start the record of the new month by putting the amount of cash still owing us at the top of the *invoice* list; and in the second case you start the record with the sum owing to you heading the *receipt* list. It sounds rather complicated, but to anyone who has read *Banks and the Workers* and grasped the idea of the illustrations given there it will be perfectly simple.

Just what you have to keep in mind is this, that invoices show what money you should pay, and receipts and credit show what you have paid.

There's one other thing secretaries are asked to remember. When ordering books for classes it is better to send a few days before the books are actually wanted: we try to send all books off by return, but some days the list of orders is so long that it is impossible to get through the whole list. And when magazine orders are being changed, give us a few days notice too, if you can—because all parcels are despatched from the printers, and we send them the standing orders a day or two before the mags are actually despatched. When anyone wants anything in a hurry, of course we make a special effort, but when you can give us a margin you may rest assured of no disappointment.

THE PLEBS OFFICE.

LETTERS

A PERSONAL EXPLANATION

DEAR COMRADE,—With M. S.'s strictures in your last issue on the analytical portion of my book, *Capitalist Enterprise and Social Progress*, I entirely agree. I dislike as much as he the bourgeois form and style which the circumstances of its production imposed upon it. In fact, I have myself strongly expressed the opinion to various comrades that this fact makes it of little use to worker-students and hardly worth review in a working-class journal.

But I do think that your reviewer might have made plain in his remarks the reason for this: namely, that it was written as a dissertation for University examiners, as a condition of holding a certain scholarship, and had to be published in that form. Moreover, when all that is necessary has been said about its form and academic "above-the-battle" attitude, I think there is something more in it for those who dig below the surface form of words than a mere argument that Socialists neglect the importance of the directive and co-ordinating function. I think I might have been given credit for "spiking" a few of the enemy's guns (even while the criticism for not making a frontal attack remained) in the following ways:—

(*a*) an examination of the ways in which the capitalist *fails* to fulfil the directive and co-ordinating function; (*b*) an attempt by tackling the economists on their own ground and along their own lines of approach to show profits in particular, and capitalist income in general, as forms of surplus-value, due to class monopoly; (*c*) a whole chapter (Chapt. 10) criticising severely the assumptions underlying orthodox economics—a criticism mildly worded, but nevertheless definite and clear; (*d*) an insistence on the important fact of class monopoly as a basic feature of capitalist society, the neglect of which causes bourgeois theory to be useless and wrong; (*e*) an insistence in a whole chapter of the Applied section that industrial crises are the result of anarchy of capitalist production.

Perhaps M. S. was so nauseated by the general form as to be unable to read these parts of the book. But I think his reviewer's conscience might have made him do them justice.

Yours fraternally,

M. H. D.

THE FUTURE OF THE I.L.P.

DEAR COMRADE,—There is really little difference between Philips Price's point of view and mine. I quite agree that the I.L.P. is doing good work in backward areas and in reaching the educated technician and professional

class. But that, after all, is mere propaganda, and the I.L.P., by claiming representation in Parliament, is more than a propagandist body. What would the I.L.P. do, I still ask, in the event of a serious crisis?

Comrade Price, I hope, does not lump me with those who proclaim the revolution for "9 a.m. on Tuesday morning, weather permitting." The crisis I was speaking of is not a deliberate revolutionary one, but one which would simply create an ugly situation which would force everybody to show their hand and declare where their loyalties were.

Finally, I think Price is right about the psychology of "splits." In a sense a split is only justified when it succeeds, and the fact that none has taken place seems to show that premature attempts to effect one would have made matters worse. I certainly do not think the time is opportune for a split, nor shall I advocate one. But it is a heart-breaking business carrying on in silence.

Yours fraternally,

J. L. GRAY.

ULSTER UNIONIST-LABOUR AND THE W.E.A.

SIR,—My attention has been called to the copy of the letter to A. W. Hungerford, Secretary of the Unionist Labour Association, and your editorial comments on the same page, both of which appear in the November issue of The PLEBS.

The W.E.A. referred to by Mr. Hungerford is not part of our Association.

Will you please insert the above in your next issue.

Yours very truly,

J. M. MACTAVISH,
General Secretary.

[We must, of course, accept Mr. Mactavish's statement that there is no connection between the W.E.A. and the organisation operating under that name in Belfast. But we are bound to point out, in justification of our comments last month, that according to printed reports of the W.E.A. there is, or has been, a Belfast branch; and we would like to ask Mr. Mactavish what, if any, steps are being taken by his Association to prevent the use of its name by an unauthorised or unaffiliated body.—Ed. PLEBS.]

I.W.C.E. AND LITERATURE

DEAR EDITOR,—Dana's article on "The Place of Literature in Workers' Education" is stimulating and helpful, but it does not quite solve the particular problems which this subject raises in our movement over here. T. A. Jackson also has some shrewd thrusts at those "ultra-proletarian" comrades who pride themselves upon a puritanical hatred of anything beautiful in art or literature. The time seems ripe for a discussion. What we have to argue about is the practical question of the relations of I.W.C.E. (and, incidentally, the Magazine) to "cultural" subjects —art, literature, music, etc.

We shall save much confusion by treating the subject under three separate headings:—

(1) Propaganda use of the Arts.
(2) Æsthetic and technical study.
(3) Application of Marxist theory.

There is no argument about (1). We all agree that in the class war we must make use of every weapon we can lay our hands on. The movement has always used propaganda pictures and poems, songs and cartoons. The only point to note here is that the "art" value of the stuff doesn't matter a tinker's curse, so long as it "gets there." What we want is "Poetry with a punch," and if we get the punch we are not very particular about the "poetry." In the case of propaganda fiction, a feeble story of sloppy sentimentality, or a blood-and-thunder tissue of impossibilities, may do better work for the cause than the productions of a socialist Hardy or Conrad—if we had one. From this point of view the art is simply a propaganda tool. It gives maximum results when its technical standard is on a level with the appreciation of the particular section for whom it is intended. Propaganda art is thus exactly the same thing as advertising art: Pope and Bradley's brilliant adverts. are just the thing to attract a West End clientele, but they wouldn't cut much ice if used by the "Two-ten Tailors"!

(2) Is it part of the business of I.W.C.E. to attempt to raise the workers' standard of appreciation and technical knowledge of literature (and art generally)? It would seem that at present any efforts in this direction

must be occasional and incidental. Both Trotsky and Bogdanoff tell us that "the workers must enter into their inheritance of *bourgeois* culture." But just now, in this country at all events, we cannot afford any diversion of energy from our main task. To run purely cultural classes would be madness in these times of crisis. An occasional note in the mag. or a hint or two in a lecture are permissible, but nothing more. That seems to me the plain logic of the matter.

But our last subdivision (3) is a horse of another colour. We ought, as good Marxians, to apply our Marxism to *every* social manifestation, including the highest intellectual and cultural forms. We do not boggle at tackling philosophy and religion; why should poetry, music and painting escape? As Dana has demonstrated, we have a distinctive contribution to make to the history and interpretation of Literature, we approach the subject from an angle which is impossible for capitalist critics and which yields definite and valuable results.

Whether it is practicable for the N.C.L.C. to run classes in "The Marxian Interpretation of Literature" is a question of ways and means to be decided by the N.C.L.C. itself, but as regards The PLEBS and its readers, there is no doubt that something can be done to prepare the way. Our business as tutors and advanced students is not only to impart what we know to our fellow-workers, but to keep on developing and increasing our own knowledge of Marxism. One of our fields of investigation should be Literature, and we have no excuse to shirk the job. Trotsky and Bogdanoff have broken the ground for us; V. F. Calverton has done great work in the American socialist journal *The Modern Quarterly*, and in his book *The Newer Spirit*. Upton Sinclair's *Mammonart* has shown how the subject can be popularised and made as interesting as any novel.

I would suggest that articles and notes on Literature should become a regular feature of the magazine—and, while we are on the job, why not a little occasional attention to painting, music and sculpture? There are surely Plebeians who can enlighten our darkness on these subjects.

Yours fraternally, ERNEST JOHNS.

PURCHASING POWER PARITY

DEAR COMRADE,—Casey's defence in the November PLEBS of his cynical reference to the purchasing power parity theory of foreign exchange is not entirely convincing.

His statement that business men, in their daily foreign exchange transactions do not refer to this theory, is incorrect. If they ignored comparative price levels they would, at the present moment, rush to buy francs, on the ground that nearly five times as many can be got for the English Pound as in 1914. The fact that they are not doing so is proof that they realise that prices of French commodities have risen to such an extent as to make a £1 worth of French currency no more than formerly.

To suggest that the Marxian law of value explains all foreign exchange complications and that therefore the p.p.p. theory is redundant is also to imply that the balance of trade theory—termed by Casey "the ordinary rules of foreign exchange" and treated in Mark Starr's *A Worker Looks at Economics*—should also be excluded on the same grounds.

The question is really whether the manifestation of the labour theory of value in international trade under abnormal conditions merits a new title or label. The new title has some justification to the extent that it throws emphasis upon the fact that a given quantity of labour in one country exchanges for a similar quantity in another country despite the varying monetary uniforms placed on these quantities by the concerned countries.

I agree with Casey that the return to the Gold Standard was an inevitable step in capitalist development and did not arise as a plot on the part of the American capitalists—as some comrades appear to believe. British capitalists took the initiative in the return to the Gold Standard and the fact that the particular position of American finance enabled it to support this return is by no means proof that the return was thrust on British finance in spite of their wishes.

Yours fraternally, GEO. PHIPPEN.

REVIEWS

STEEL

Steel. Labour and Capital Studies, No. 8 (Labour Research Department, 1s. and 2s. 6d.).

ALL students of economics are conversant with the all-important role metallurgy has played in the modern phase of capitalism. Pavlovitch in his *Foundations of Imperialist Policy*, develops the thesis of how the imperialist epoch is characterised by "*the transference of the centre of gravity of economic life of the capitalist countries from the textile to the metallurgical industry.*" We welcome, therefore, this latest study supplementing our knowledge of the industry.

The booklet is the work of three hands. Walton Newbold in his well-known style traces the historical development. He gives amazing details of the ramifications of various interests, the trustification of the industry, and an indication of present-day industrial and financial tendencies. Tables of steel trade profits and dividends round off a very useful section. There is a chapter by W. A. Stevens giving an outline of Trade Union organisation in the industry, the history of that remarkable amalgamation scheme, the Iron and Steel Trades' Confederation, proving how sincere and capable men can circumvent legal obstacles to unity. The iron and steel trades boast of extraordinary freedom from strikes and lock-outs, and in the sketch of the machinery of wages negotiations, Stevens attributes this to "the automatic operation of this (the Midland Iron Trade Scale, 1889) and of the sliding scales which were afterwards adopted by other branches of the industry, combined with the fact that practically every dispute which might arise in a works belonging to an employer who was a member of his trade association could be settled by the machinery provided." In commenting on the general application of the three-shift system of eight hours in place of the longer shifts of twelve hours, in 1919, our author says, "An inquiry into the comparative outputs of melting furnaces, rolling mills, and other plants has proved that there has been an increase of output since the adoption of the shorter working day, amounting to between 20 and 30 per cent."

The installation of new plant has also thrown "greater responsibility on the operatives and entailed more strenuous labour." Ca' canny indeed! The slump has resulted in the sliding scales carrying a lower percentage than the cost of living advance. Therefore, with the exception of the lowest paid grades, wages are now considerably less in purchasing power than in 1914. According to figures in the current issue (October) of the *Ministry of Labour Gazette*, the cost of living is 76 per cent. up on 1914 rates, whereas the wages not up to this standard shown by increases includes tinplate workers, 34½, and heavy iron and steel 70—20.

Philips Price contributes a final chapter on the French and German iron and steel industry, particularly valuable in helping to elucidate the tangled skein of European politics.

In regard to the serious position this basic industry is in at present, a very illuminating article was published in the *Manchester Guardian Commercial*, October 29th, on the "Remedy for Steel Trade Troubles." The writer, F. Scarf, Managing Director, Bromford Iron Company, endorses the view of Stevens above that wages cost or labour efficiency are not to blame. In coal we have a cheaper and better material than our competitors. What is at fault is mainly the out-of-dateness of plant and organisation. The output of British blast furnaces is miserably low, as the following comparison will show:—

	Tons per annum.
Great Britain	40,000
France and Belgium	60,000
America	170,000

Mr. George, an American steel works engineer, writing to the Iron and Steel Institute, says, "To his mind there were too many steel plants in Great Britain. Consolidation of the capital invested and of the orders into fewer plants might possibly be the only means of permanent recovery for the steel industry in Great Britain. In other

words, the introduction of the most modern and best possible mechanical equipment might not in itself be sufficient to save the situation."

Philips Price points out that the German masters desire an arrangement for the general reduction of the number of blast furnaces working in Europe to-day, "which, they say, are too numerous for the markets of the world to absorb the products." At the Coal Commission inquiry on October 27th, Sir William Larke, on behalf of the National Federation of Iron and Steel Manufacturers, indirectly substantiated the above when questioned by Sir William Beveridge: "Has the world production of iron and steel gone up or down? We know that British production has gone down, but are we losing to other people or sharing in a misfortune common to the whole world?"

Witness: "We are certainly losing in relation to other people. The American production has gone up, and in the last two years has been higher than in any pre-war. The production of American pig-iron, he added, was now 36,000,000 tons compared with 25,800,000 tons in 1913. He didn't think lowering prices was the remedy. A stable price level and stability was necessary."

Thus one more illustration of Capitalism's dilemma!

J. HAMILTON.

"SCIENTIFIC" CONFUSION

Problems of Philosophy. By G. Watts Cunningham (Harrap, 8s. 6d.).

This book, by a Professor of Philosophy in the University of Texas, is intended for beginners, and is certainly very clearly and readably written. Though the ideas of many philosophers are mentioned, it is in no sense a history, but, as its title implies, just a presentation of the various types of questions which come before the philosopher in his work of unifying all branches of knowledge.

All the familiar problems such as Matter, Mind, Cause, Beauty, etc., find place, as also do the views and arguments concerning them, both for and against, while the author contributes nothing very definite of his own except negations resulting from the clash of argument. The philosophical pros and cons are, so to speak, spread out on the table "without bias," and the student can pick where he likes.

For the purpose of displaying the confusion in which philosophy finds itself the book is excellent. So if a Pleb with money to burn wants a good bird's-eye-view of this present-day mix-up, he will find it here.

Part I introduces the field to be surveyed in the remaining five parts. It also gives a good though brief account of the method of science, which the author thinks should be applied in philosophy as it is in general science.

Apparently, the author thinks he is employing scientific method when all the time he is taking the various categories, Mind, Matter and so on, just as he finds them, and without any inquiry as to how such ideas are built up.

These categories should be settled first, for there *is* a science that can do it—the Science of Understanding—but our author gives no hint of his acquaintance with it.

So long as Mind and Matter are treated as being *totally* different, and not as two parts of the one universe just mentally separated for purposes of classification, so long will philosophers give us rides on roundabouts which bring us back to the same place. Possibly the rides are pleasant, but Plebeians are confronted with more serious work than the pleasant passing of time.

The net result of reading the volume, unless one is fore-armed with the Science of Understanding, will be just that mental confusion in which our rulers may for a time continue to set up their idol of authority whose various names are many—God, Life Force, Mind, Time, Order, Purpose, Cause and many others—but in this book the new departure consists in draping the original figure with the attractive mantle of "Science."

All periods of transition from one economic order to another are necessarily reflected in the literature of their times. This explains the present outpouring of philosophical books which put forward the theoretical aspects of the economic fight—each side attempting either to justify its position or to confuse its opponents, though not necessarily with dishonesty, but just as it sees matters.

As the fight progresses, new and more subtle weapons are needed, so it is quite understandable that Viscount Haldane in the foreword should say, "A book such as is this one has been needed for some time."

We would like to ask—by whom, and for what purpose? F. C.

SCOTT NEARING'S LATEST BOOK

Educational Frontiers. By Scott Nearing (Seltzer, N. York).

This is not only a fine tribute by Nearing to his inspirer and teacher, Simon N. Patten, but is an effective indictment of capitalist education and a fine suggestive picture of what the teacher ought to be. Patten was no more than a Radical, but he was a real teacher. In comparing this book with Sinclair's *Goose-Step* we see how the teacher and the journalist treat the same theme. Sinclair rapidly goes from town to town investigating with characteristic gusto case after case of suppressed opinion and persecuted teachers, and he bewilders the mind with immense detail of the ramifications of Big Business and its control over the schools. Nearing, on the contrary, takes the one case of Simon N. Patten; makes you feel the reality of the man and his power to stimulate thought in his pupils and to inspire them to take the teacher's place in "the firing line of civilisation"; and then shows how he was, after years of brilliant and faithful service, thrown out by the College Board.

Further, Nearing expounds his own high conception of the methods and aim of a teacher with such a vigour and wealth of illustration that it would be extremely beneficial if every N.C.L.C. teacher and class-leader could give the book the serious consideration it merits; our colleagues in the Teachers' Labour League can make good use of it. More and more the school becomes a factory for the mass production of the capitalist-pattern mind. Nearing speaks from inside knowledge of this process, and appeals to teachers to organise to control education. Youth, assisted by the real teachers, will make the revolution.

His handling of those educationists who plead for "facts only, and no conclusions" is worth quoting:—

"Conclusions are no less facts than the facts on which they were based, since the whole of knowledge is a summary of experience. . . . The argument for 'facts only' quickly reaches a point when the teacher presents what is 'safe' and stops talking when 'dangerous' subjects are reached. The teacher who accepts this argument is relieved from the mental labour of reaching conclusions and is also enabled to avoid risky opinions."

M. S.

THE GENTLEMANLY WAY

Revolution by Reason. By Oswald Mosley (Birmingham Borough Labour Party, 2d.).

The present and impending social chaos has stimulated a great production of economic pamphlets and has especially stimulated that branch of economic theory known as "currency reform."

This school generally believe that the lack of markets is almost entirely due to the lack of currency, and that if the control of currency were used judiciously, trade would again revive and a general prosperity return to this country. Most of the currency reformers propose to issue this paper money to the industrial capitalists, and thus allow the goods to be sold at their cost of production without profit, the currency supplying the profit.

Mr. Mosley (though he does not give full justice to these others) differs from them in this, that he desires to issue the currency to the workers. These proposals in all cases demand the Nationalisation of the Banks.

The subject is one bristling with difficulty, and it would hardly be fair to criticise Mr. Mosley's proposals on the ground that no indication is given as to how the Banks can be nationalised, or that most of the suggestions are generalisations.

There are, however, one or two points which involve misconceptions, and which will require far more attention than this pamphlet gives.

The proposal to give the credits to the workers is one with which we can readily sympathise, and if a rise of wages of 3d. per week is all that is required to begin with, we need not trouble with the forced increase of wages, as the State can easily do that by stopping taking their 3d. in insurance premiums. A rise of more than 3d. can automatically be given in this way, but what it is necessary to realise is that wages are not settled in that way, and if Mr. Mosley's scheme interferes with the employers for the forcing up of wages he will have to overcome the industrial capitalists.

Then issuing money in the form of credits means taxing everybody, and this in effect means that the workers would have to pay some of their own rise, and the rest would have to come off the capitalist. So long as the capitalists hold the economic power and a Labour Government cannot pass its own legislation this also seems a tough proposition.

Then it is asserted that "money in the hands of the workers means a demand upon the great staple industries in which men and machines are now idle." Is this the case? Money in the hands of the workers would result in a demand for more food, more clothes and more houses and, if we can judge from the war period, perhaps gramophones, wireless sets, pianos, and other little luxuries would be added. All giving employment, no doubt, but are these the staple industries? Food comes from abroad largely and is largely paid for by manufactures sent abroad. The trouble with capitalism is that it cannot get rid of its manufactures, hence the unemployment is largely in the engineering and shipbuilding trades, and in those, like transport and commerce, which cater for the manufacturing trades. Coal also is badly hit. The issue of currency to the workers will not cure the lack of markets for these goods.

If capitalism could save itself by the printing of bank-notes or the issue of credits that would be done, but capitalism is doomed. Undoubtedly as the programme of the *Communist Manifesto* laid down, the control of credit would be one of the first duties of the workers, but whether it can be used in any way for the workers' benefit while capitalism lasts is extremely doubtful. If Labour had the power to carry through Mr. Mosley's suggestions, then it would have the power to accomplish the socialisation of the whole of industry.

We would suggest to those in the movement who think of transition plans not to issue them in printed form until they are in the form of concrete proposals which can be considered. This is not the case with this pamphlet, though it may have value in interesting people in a subject too much avoided by the members of the movement. A. W.

PROPAGANDA SHOT AND SHELL

Murder! An Indictment of British Imperialism in China (C.P. 1d.) *Who are the Warmakers?* (C.P. 1d.) are useful and timely revelations of the ravages of imperialism and the costs of war preparations. The Protocol which is summarily dismissed in the latter of the two mentioned pamphlets is sympathetically expounded by Mrs. Swanwick in *The Geneva Protocol* (I.L.P., 2d.) This proposal will remain of historical interest to prove the existence of those who believe that arbitration and disarmament are possible under capitalism. *Sweating in The Catering Trade*, by C. W. Gibson (1d.), as one reviewer has already suggested ought to be bought by the dozen and left behind in every restaurant. S.

THE U.D.C.

Builders of Peace. H. M. Swanwick (Swarthmore Press, 2s. 6d.).

This is a history of the Union of Democratic Control from its inception in the autumn of 1914 down to its tenth anniversary. The "U.D.C." is of great interest as representing the survival—and even fairly vigorous survival—of the ideas of one period of capitalism into the next and widely

different period. This fact was in part responsible for its success inside the ranks of organised Labour, where also the movement of events had far outstripped the prevailing ideology. Moreover, it must be admitted that the propaganda was powerfully helped in another way—the inevitable consequence of the general "U.D.C." position is a large insistence upon the importance of the individual statesman, who is here represented as personally holding in his hand the destiny of the nation. This view has great value for the purposes of "political" propaganda, where for the most part personalities stand at a high premium as compared with principles. But the propaganda was really valuable in the sense that it was easy to demonstrate that diplomatic duplicity was as frequent among one set of belligerents as the other; and this led to a certain internationalism in regard to the war-situation. And always there was the call to the masses to assert their right to self-determination in these high matters.

In this book, the present secretary, Mrs. Swanwick, herself one of the ablest and most active of the "U.D.C." leaders, gives a clear and vigorous statement of the history of the Union. She pays eloquent and deserved tribute to her predecessor in that office, the late Mr. E. D. Morel.

Speaking of "personalities," admirers of that fine piece of satire, *1920*, will be interested to learn that its author was Mr. J. A. Hobson.

T. A.

POPLAR

Red Poplar. By C. Keys (Lab. Pub. Co., 6d.).

This is the story of Poplar's struggle with the capitalists' administration in Whitehall. The speech of Bramley's at Scarborough can be applied to Poplar. "If you disturb the landed interests and abolish the exploitation of the wage earner, then you have to face what Russia is facing to-day." Poplar is trying within the limits of its possibilities to break the circle of starvation and destitution which are the results of Capitalism in Poplar, and the forces of Law and the machinery of administration have been put into force against it.

It is worthy of note that the enemies of Poplar are not exclusively Capitalist. Leaders of the Labour Party have expressed their dislike of Poplarism, and not a few Labour candidates at local elections are quick to explain that they are not affected by the complaint. But the solid support given by the working classes in Poplar shows us that if a plain straightforward working-class policy is put before the people they will support you through thick and thin, and the converse is as equally true, that attempts to serve two masters by trying to serve the working class while refraining from disturbing the possessing class will only result in the confusion of mind among the workers which lays itself open to the "Red Letter" tactics of recent elections.

H. M.

FOR GOODNESS' SAKE

Things and Ideals. By M. C. Otto (Harrap, 5s.).

This author thinks we require a new ideal which, though based on the facts of life, shall save us from the doom of a science that makes explosives without considering their good or bad uses.

He therefore attempts to envisage an ideal arising from *things*, but free on the one hand from that supernaturalism which is supposed to be superior to this world, and on the other, from the scientific mechanistic ideas which leave no room for man's choice.

Even "right for right's sake" is wrong, for it has no definite object in view and may be misled by those with a bad purpose; *e.g.*, Bernhardi preaching war as the "duty" of the German people.

His ideal, in the end, boils down to promoting the "higher life" *of the people*, pursuing the "good" *of the people*, giving play to the "ennobling" possibilities of life *for the people*, and so on—never allowing the ideal to become a mere abstraction. And yet could there be a greater abstraction?

He exudes such a universal "goodness" that we do not think he will lose his job in the University of Wisconsin over this book, but should Young America ever read it they may count on our sympathy—we at least feel *so* "good." F. C.

AGRICULTURE

A National Rural Policy. Prepared by a Special Committee on Rural Reconstruction (Labour Publishing Co., Ltd., 1s.).

This booklet gives some very useful information as to the future possibilities of agricultural production, showing that if electric power were distributed through the agricultural districts and more scientific methods of farming were introduced we should be able to double our present output.

A clear indication is given that the private ownership of land—being a hindrance to agricultural production—should be abolished, and the benefits of "non-profit-making service" in agriculture are stressed; but no clear lead is given as to how these changes are to come about.

Although a smattering of Guild Socialism runs through them most of the recommendations of the Committee are apparently based on a belief in the indefinite continuance of some form of capitalist production. Farmers as a class are notoriously opposed to any big changes in agriculture, but the farm workers are now being forced by their bad conditions and low wages to consider these matters, and no doubt the educational scheme being arranged by the N.C.L.C. for the National Union of Agricultural Workers will hasten their awakening.

Actual farm workers apparently have no place at present on the "Special Committee on Rural Reconstruction" as no mention is made anywhere in its proposals of such things as Trades Unions (much less of the class struggle !).

From the point of view of information this booklet is useful; but in spite of the Committee's efforts, a real "National Rural Policy" still awaits production.

J. E. M.

A HISTORICAL NOTE

OFTEN it happens that when the history of a period comes to be written a vacant space must be left because this incident or that was never committed to paper, and the passing away of contemporary participants leaves the incident on record only as a second or third hand memory. Having heard several conflicting statements from America as to how Lenin came into contact with the ideas of De Leon, I took the opportunity of being in Moscow for inquiring.

On January 8th, 1918, at the third All Russian Congress of Soviets, Boris Reinstein, who for twenty years was a close co-worker with De Leon, was approached by Lenin, who said, "You are an S.L.P.er?" Lenin went on to say that he had read an article in the *Workers' Dreadnought* by Margaret Watt, entitled "Marx, De Leon, Lenin," and that he was anxious to become better acquainted with De Leon's ideas. He asked Reinstein if he had any of De Leon's works. To this Reinstein answered that a bag of his, containing De Leon's works, had been lost at Kharkoff station some time previously and, although he would try to find it, he had little hope for its return. Lenin gave him a letter addressed to the railway workers of the Kharkoff line, asking them to assist in the search.

Some months later the bag of literature was discovered and while Lenin was lying convalescent, recovering from the assassin's bullet wound, he wrote to Reinstein saying he would like to take the opportunity to read De Leon's works, which Reinstein then delivered to him. This was towards the end of August, 1918. Two or three months later Lenin expressed to Reinstein

his admiration for De Leon's thought, and said he had intended writing an article on De Leon for the fifth anniversary of his death, but had been prevented by pressure of other work. Lenin was particularly impressed by De Leon's pamphlet, *The Burning Question of Trade Unionism*, in which towards the end, De Leon draws attention to the fact that under class society through thousands of years, the government of the ruling class had had a *territorial* basis. De Leon continues to enlarge on this and lays it down that such a territorial basis will not be suitable under a Socialist State; but that a Socialist State must base its government on elections of workers from *their place of work*.

Lenin said: De Leon could not have had the experience of our 1905 Petrograd Soviet before him, for this pamphlet was written in 1904. It shows a depth of thought we Europeans had not known in De Leon—we had not become acquainted with his writings and looked upon him merely as a sectarian.

Moscow. H. M. E.

Will secretaries please note that, owing to pressure of work, we cannot execute any further orders for sets of maps to illustrate Economic Geography lectures.

The addresses of two comrades willing to supply enlarged copies of maps to order were given in "N.C.L.C. Notes" last month. Please write them direct.

The NATIONAL COUNCIL of LABOUR COLLEGES

HEAD OFFICE—62 HANOVER STREET, EDINBURGH

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

LANTERN SLIDES: Lantern lectures enable a College to get in touch with a larger number of workers than can be reached by classes. In addition to that they can be a source of income. The N.C.L.C. Lantern Slides Department has now been organised so that sets of slides may be lent on the conditions stated in General Circular No. 56. At the same time Colleges covering a large area will find it of greater advantage to purchase a set of slides. The profit on one good meeting would pay the total cost. The sets of slides at present available cover the following subjects: Russia, the Paris Commune, Modern Imperialism, the Story of Independent Working-class Education, Primitive Man, the Co-operative Movement. No active College should fail to run some Lantern Lectures, but if these are to have the full measure of success steps should be taken to purchase a lantern as the hiring charge for a single night in often fully half of what would be the cost of a second-hand machine. Some student, *e.g.* electrical engineer, might with an assistant make it his business to look after the lantern and acquire skill in operating it. Applications for the slides should be sent to the N.C.L.C. Office, but all pictures that might make suitable slides should be forwarded to J. Hamilton, 11, Channell Road, Fairfield, Liverpool, who is in charge of this side of the work. Apart from the Co-operative Union, no other working-class educational body has a Lantern Slides Department, we believe, and it is up to all Colleges to take full advantage of it.

"*The N.C.L.C. and Its Work.*"—It is hoped that a new edition of this booklet will be available by the end of December. Colleges will find the booklet very useful in affiliation campaigns and considerable numbers could also be sold at meetings and classes. Every Literature Secretary is asked to forward

an order as soon as possible in order that we may know how many to print. The cover will be a cartoon cover. The charge will be 1s. 8d. per dozen, postage extra. Special terms for large quantities.

N.C.L.C. Library.—This Library is now available for tutors and those training as tutors and full advantage should be taken of it. Copies of the conditions and a list of books available have been sent to each College Secretary.

N.C.L.C. Calendar, 1926.—The calendar this year will contain an entirely new cartoon which even W.E.A.ers will not be able to resist hanging on the wall. Needless to say the cartoon is by J. F. H. Local Colleges will find it worth while presenting copies to be hung in local Labour Clubs, etc., and many students will be anxious to have copies to hang up in their homes and to send to their friends. The cost of the calendar will be 8d. per single copy (postpaid), or 6s. per dozen (postage extra).

National Association of Plasterers, Granolithic and Cement Workers.—A letter sent by Mr. J. A. Loftus (Secretary of the Liverpool Branch of the Plasterers' Union) to J. Hamilton of Liverpool says, "I am directed to convey to you and Comrade Williams our appreciation of the splendid lectures that have already been given."

Publicity.—Special thanks are due to T. Lowe for his able letters in the *Co-operative News* and the *Warrington Examiner*.

New Local Applications.—So far as returns for November show, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Belfast Labour Colleges come out top in the number of *new* affiliations received during the month. Wake up, England! Of the class groups Wakefield is top as regards affiliations—unless other groups are hiding their light under a bushel.

What the Divisions are doing

Div. 1.—The formation of new classes still proceeds. By the end of November it is expected that 35 weekly, 2 fortnightly and 5 Trade Union branch classes will be running. One class is being held under the auspices of the N.W. London Federation of the I.L.P. and is intended to coach active I.L.P. propagand.sts in the facts of the Mining Industry.

A class on Trade Union Law and Compensation will probably commence in London in the New Year. We invite all Trade Union branch officials and T.U. staffs to attend this class. The London Divisional Organiser, 11a, Penywern Road, Earl's Court, London, S.W. 5, will be glad to hear from intending students.

The Woolwich Labour College is arranging a series of Lantern Lectures at the Plumstead Radical Club in the New Year. The series will extend over three months in the form of weekly lectures based on the N.C.L.C. Slides.

A great amount of educational work is being carried on at Trade Union Branch meetings and Labour Parties, etc. The A.E.U. and N.A.F.T.A. Branches in particular are arranging for N.C.L.C. speakers on subjects varying from Darwinism to Banking and Indian working-class conditions.

J. D. Thom sends a copy of an excellent syllabus issued by the Eastern District Committee. Four out of five local secretaries are, I believe, N.U.D.A.W. members.

Div. 2.—Guildford class is so far the best this year. Woking class has shown an excellent example by holding a social to raise the sinews of war. Welcome is extended to J. E. Mathews, a new voluntary tutor. We have some good supporters in the A.S.L.E. & F.

Div. 3.—Nineteen classes are very active in this Division.

Div. 4.—A Conference has been held at Pontypool and a successful week-end school (lecturer, M. Philips Price) was held in the Rhondda. Tredegar Co-operative Society have decided to pay for the books and fees of co-operative students attending N.C.L.C. Classes. Fifteen classes are now running throughout the area.

Div. 5.—Classes are being held in Plymouth, Newton Abbot, Exeter, Barnstaple, Bath, Bristol, Cheltenham, Gloucester, Swindon. Other classes are being arranged.

Div. 6.—Organiser Barr had a splendid reception at the Burough Labour Party and the Central Organising Committee are handing over their Speakers' Class to the N.C.L.C. In conjunction with him they have decided to send circulars recommending all Divisional Labour Parties to affiliate on the 2d. per member basis. Sparkbrook I.L.P.: The Young

Socialist League and the East Birmingham I.L.P. have affiliated. Classes have been formed in Birmingham, Stourbridge, Sparkbrook, Smethwick, Leamington, Newcastle, Aston, West Bromwich, Wolverhampton, Duddieston and Walsall. An address given to 150 A.S.L.E. & F. members resulted in an immediate demand for a class.

Div. 7.—Three new class groups have been organised—Barnsley, Keighley and Wakefield.

Div. 8.—Organiser Paton reports that the finest class he has in North Lancs. is that arranged in conjunction with the Nelson Weavers' Scheme. The Manchester debate between J. W. Muir, Nat. Org. W.E.A., and J. P. M. Millar, Gen. Sec. N.C.L.C. afforded fine publicity for our work.

Div. 9.—A Labour College class has been opened at Berwick-on-Tweed for the first time. A week-end school was held at Chopwell on Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 26th and 27th. Comrades Derricott and Coxon were the lecturers. A demonstration was held on the Sunday night when about one thousand people attended. Redcar held their first week-end school on October 3rd and 4th. Comrade Coxon delivered four lectures on Imperialism. The school was well attended. Classes have been started in several places where previously there were no N.C.L.C. Classes, *e.g.*, Skinningrove, Hinderwell, Brotton, Frizington, Cleator Moor and Parton.

Div. 10.—*Scotland.*—Stirlingshire College has 6 classes running, Ayrshire 15, Fife 16, Dumbartonshire 4, Paisley 2, Greenock 3, Glasgow 28, and Edinburgh 27. Seven new affiliations have been secured by the Glasgow College which is also forming Children's and Youths' Classes in the Co-operative movement. Comrade Villiers, Secretary of the Glasgow College, reports that over one hundred students attended a meeting and decided to form a Glasgow Labour College Students' Association on, we believe, lines similar to the Liverpool L.C. Students' Association.

Div. 11.—*Ireland.*—Arrangements are being made to start a class in Londonderry. In Belfast the Shankill Labour Party has affiliated to the N.C.L.C. and the affiliations of the Transport and General Workers' Union (No. 11 Area) has been extended to cover another 1,000 members on the 2d. basis. In ten months, January to October, 10,000 members belonging to 18 branches or organisations have become affiliated on the 2d. basis. Two Trades Councils and one District Committee have also joined up.

Div. 12.—Chesterfield L.C. has 14 classes, Derby 5. Other colleges have not yet reported. Will the secretaries please note?

Directory.—Additions and Corrections.

Div. 2.—Newport Class Group, Sec.: A. E. J. Fry, 30, Coppins Bridge, Newport, Isle of Wight.
" Witney Class Group, Sec.: Miss Doris Pearce, Bampton Road, Curbridge, Oxon.
" Bournemouth Class Group, Sec.: W. J. Hookey, 17, Spurgeon Road, Parkstone, Bournemouth.

Div. 5.—Bath Labour College, Sec.: H. N. Sheppard, 17, Crescent Gardens, Bath.
" Barnstaple Labour College, Sec.: S. J. Hancock, 15, Charles Street, Barnstaple.

Div. 7.—Barnsley Class Group, Sec: George I. Fretwell, 35, Alan Road, Darton, Barnsley.
" Keighley Class Group, Sec.: H. Wallback, 70, Wheathead Lane, Exley Head, Keighley.
" Wakefield Class Group, Sec.: Edmund Frow, 2, Thompson's Yard, Westgate, Wakefield.

Div. 8.—North Lancs. Acting Sec.: A. H. Paton, c/o. Clarkson, 15, Lady Place, Preston, Lancs.

Div. 9.—North Eastern Labour College, Sec.: Councillor J. Stewart, 7, Plantation Street, Wallsend-on-Tyne.

Div. 10.—Dundee Labour College, Sec.: S. H. Johnston, 1, Esplanade, Dundee.

Div. 11.—Belfast Labour College, Sec.: P. M'Neily, 7, Whiterock Gardens, Belfast.

Div. 12.—Chesterfield Labour College, Sec.: W. H. Bennett, Rook Lane, Sutton Scarsdale, near Chesterfield.

What PLEBS LEAGUERS are doing

AT its ast meeting the Plebs League Executive spent some time in discussing suggestions from various districts as to the kind of activities in which Plebs Groups could usefully engage. It was resolved to draw up a circular, to be issued to all members shortly. The exact terms of the circular have still to be passed by the E.C., but it is worth while here summarising the principal suggestions put forward.

They include :—

(i) "Pioneering" I.W.C.E. work in new areas ; and assisting, by means of social activities, etc., in the consolidation and extension of N.C.L.C. classes and colleges. Pushing the sale of the magazine and PLEBS publications.

(ii) The discussion of improvements in class methods, subject matter of lectures, new subjects, etc. ; and the organisation of study groups in connection with lectures, to which all students might be invited.

(iii) The holding of study groups and conferences of tutors and potential tutors.

(iv) The initiating, or encouraging, of pieces of individual or co-operative research in (*a*) local industrial history, especially trade union records ; (*b*) local organisation of capital, control of local industries, etc. ; (*c*) wasteful methods of capitalism, breakdown of methods, changes in processes, etc.

(v) The inauguration, in conjunction with the N.C.L.C., of special educational campaigns on particular issues—*e.g.*, topical, political or industrial issues such as the Locarno Pact, the Dawes Scheme, etc.

(vi) The inauguration (or co-operation, wherever other bodies take the initiative) with local working-class organisations, of special conferences on current working-class problems ; *e.g.*, Labour's attitude to the Empire ; the Fascist Movement ; what a Labour Goverment should do—Home Office, Foreign Office, India Office ; steps towards Nationalisation ; finance policy ; industrial problems—the Alliance and the General Council, etc., etc.

Here at least is a varied programme which should find work for groups in all sorts of areas, and for industrial members of widely differing temperaments and abilities. Most if not all of these activities are already being undertaken by Plebs Leaguers in one area or another. Get busy in your own area—in one way, or all. And let us know what you are doing, and how the work goes. Your experiences will be helpful to others elsewhere. Pass the word along.

A Valued Contributor

In reply to certain inquiries, J. L. Gray, whose contributions to the pages of The PLEBS during the past year or two will have been appreciated by all I.W.C.E.ers., asks us to state that he is employed by, and is only responsible to, the Department of Adult Education, University College, Nottingham ; and is *not* employed by the W.E.A. Although the University College co-operates with the W.E.A. in organising his tutorial classes, both are well aware of his advocacy of the principle of Independent Working-Class Education.

W. H.

GET READY

SAVE UP

—& let's have your bob (annual sub. to the Plebs League) early in the New Year.

Thanks.

No Copartnership between Labour and Capital

in industrial organisation, political activities, or working-class education, is the slogan of the

National Council of Labour Colleges

The N.C.L.C. operates the bulk of British Trade Union Educational Schemes and provides Evening Classes, Week-end and Summer Schools, Residential Tuition, Correspondence Courses, Lantern Slides, etc. It has more Trade Union Educational Schemes and Trade Union Correspondence Course Students than any other Working-Class Educational Organisation.

WHY NOT TRY AN N.C.L.C. CORRESPONDENCE COURSE?

Send 3d. in stamps for 24-page booklet on "The N.C.L.C. and Its Work" to J. P. M. Millar, General Secretary, N.C.L.C., 62, Hanover Street, Edinburgh

Printed at the Athenæum Printing Works, Redhill.