

AMERICAN MINERS

set to work to find out *WHY*

TEN thousand miners in the fifth sub-district of Illinois, United Mine Workers of America, have launched a significant experiment in Labour Education. Although more than half of the mines in this territory are closed for lack of demand, these union men, in the face of a hard winter, have reached the conclusion that their real hope lies in awakening the rank and file of the organisation to the underlying and economic causes of the hardship that is confronting them. They therefore propose to combat ignorance and apathy with organised education.

The Sub-District Convention, held early in June, 1924, resolved to adopt this course after listening to a report from President William Daech, in which he suggested the formation of an educational committee and the adoption of a vigorous policy of education for the rank and file. A committee of five was elected from the floor of this convention, a former mine worker—Tom Tippet—was secured as director of the experiment, and in the blazing heat of an Illinois August the educational work was begun.

Discouragements piled up.

"No one will come in the summer," argued one critic.

"Miners don't want education; they are content with white mule and the movies," complained another.

The committee and the officers persisted, and now, at the end of three months, there are more than 180 students, grouped in ten classes, and well scattered over the district.

After a great deal of discussion, the students decided to spend the first three months on ancient history, supplemented by English and public speaking.

The next period will be devoted to American history, with particular reference to the history of the American labour movement. Most of these students never finished the grammar school; some of them went to work when they were twelve years of age; but they assemble, week after week, discuss the topic of the evening, bring in compositions, do outside work in the public libraries—in short, they act quite like other folks that are interested to enlarge the boundaries of their knowledge.

Labour education comes as something of an innovation in these Illinois mining towns, in which the saloon and the movie palace have heretofore predominated. The schools in this section are usually conducted by quite young girls, whose education has extended little beyond the high school, and whose background is that of the Illinois mining villages. There are few forms of recreation and almost no means of spreading enlightenment. The action of the union in setting up the machinery for labour education introduces an intellectual interest which has had no counterpart since the days when the socialists were broadcasting their literature among the miners. But between the two cases there is this essential difference: the socialists were always a minority among the miners, whereas the present educational programme was adopted by the recent Convention without a dissenting vote.

Questions are being asked of the educational committee and of the officers: Is this scheme working? How far do you propose to go? Those in charge of the work have no set answer. Thus far there has been an unprecedented interest in the classes. Beginning with their October pro-

AN APOLOGY

The fourth and concluding instalment of Dr. James Johnston's series of articles on "The Method of Science" is unavoidably held over till next month.

gramme, the educational committee expects, in addition to the regular classes, to bring into the district, at intervals of about four weeks, prominent teachers in various fields related to the class work, who will not only conduct classes, but will hold public lectures in the mining villages where the classes have been organised. The work of these outsiders in the classes will bring the miners into touch with the methods and ideas of men and women who have made a mark in the world. The public lectures will spread the work of education to the whole village.

Thus far the entire cost of the educational work has been borne by the sub-district treasury. The classes, local autonomous groups, decide their educational programme with the assistance of the educational committee and the officers. There seems to be no limit to the work which this educational committee may do except that set by the funds of the union and the interest and capacity of the students, most of whom are under thirty, and all of whom are looking for a way out of the tangled maze of economic vassalage in which the miners of Illinois now find themselves.

SCOTT NEARING.

REVIEWS

A WELSHMAN LOOKS AT THE WELSH
The Industrial Revolution in South Wales. By Ness Edwards (Labour Publishing Co., 2s. 6d. Postpaid from PLEBS, 2s. 8d.).

NESS EDWARDS has set an excellent example to students passing through our local classes. With no prior training in a highly specialised field of historical research, he has extracted some of the most telling passages from contemporary journals and government reports bearing on the Industrial Revolution in Wales, fitting them into the pattern of the hideous pavement of Welsh industrialism like the stones of a mosaic.

He has done something more. He has laid the foundations of an N.C.L.C. school of research into the conditions of life and work in Great Britain. Would that in the near future we might have a similar sketch of the historical development of each of the great industrial districts.

His chapters on the early strikes and on the Chartist struggles open up to us new vistas, and show us these not so much as great sweeping currents of historic forces and vast class conflicts, but as they appeared to the men who took part in them.

Here is no university-trained scholar looking out of his college window or bringing back from the coalfield his specimens and duly exhibiting them. Here is a working miner himself writing of his own people. Knowing as I do the exclusive spirit of these valley

dwellers, the group-consciousness of each mining village (with its local medicine man either from or on his way to Penywern Road) and the pugnacity of the young bulls of the Rhondda, I sincerely hope that Ness will not be put through it after the manner of Caradoc Evans for writing in another sphere of another aspect of Welsh popular life!

Anyone who wants to understand the Welsh "boys" who pioneered the College movement to so great an extent, and led some of us "highbrows" out of the mental wilderness wherein we were wandering, must buy, read and re-read, Ness Edwards' book.

J. T. WALTON NEWBOLD.

"FREE" LABOURERS

The Theatre: An Art and an Industry.

By H. R. Barbor (Labour Publishing Co. Price 1s., cloth 2s. 6d.).

It is a significant fact that the opponents of the Actors' Association number all the really successful members of the theatrical profession. The Stage Guild is full of "artists" who are afraid that any form of combination, especially a trade union form, will be "in restraint of art." Their souls must be free for their work, their managers must be free for their business, and things must go on as they have always done.

We never knew what artistic people they were before. When we have seen them earning their daily bread in one commercial play after another,