

Vol. XIII. No. 2

February, 1921

THE PLEBS

AGITATE EDUCATE ORGANISE

“The social revolution of to-day cannot begin in earnest until it has shed all superstition concerning the past.”

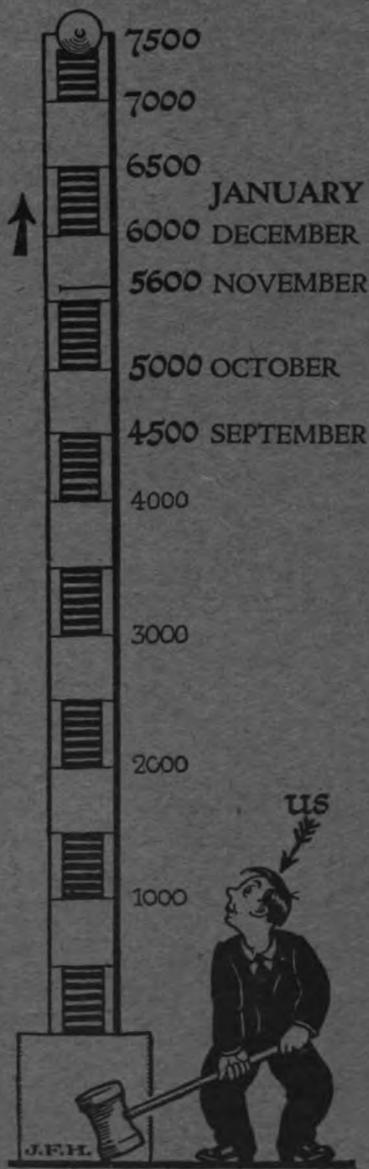
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THE PLEBS

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

Vol. XIII.

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A bigger circulation means bigger liabilities. We appeal to all our supporters to settle their accounts promptly, and regularly. Don't leave it to us to write and remind you that you owe us something. That shouldn't be necessary—among proletarians.

OUR POINT OF VIEW

THE *Times* has once again been making investigations into the various activities of the more militant sections of the British working-class movement. On January 14 it published an article by Dr. Shadwell dealing with the educational work of the London and Scottish Labour Colleges, and the various provincial classes. Besides giving a very fair—indeed, a quite respectful—account of the origin and development of the two Colleges, and of their present activities, Dr. Shadwell was bold enough to conclude with a paragraph headed "Future Developments."

I confess that this movement, with its independence, its desire for knowledge and self-improvement, appeals to me. . . . *It is certainly going to have a future, and I think a great one.* The London College has acquired ground at Kew, where it already has an extension, and contemplates building on a considerable scale. It will not lack clients, for there is an immense reservoir of latent capacity and aspiration among the wage-earners.

PLEBS readers did not need Dr. Shadwell's commendation to help them in making up their minds as to the vital importance of the Labour Colleges and their work to the workers' movement. But we trust that *Work for Trade Unionists* Trade Union officials of a more conservative temperament, who pay more attention to a *Times* article than to any advocacy by mere "rank-and-filers," will not fail to take note of his tribute. And we may take this opportunity of urging all our readers to do their utmost to win the support of their Unions for the two established Colleges in London and Glasgow, as well as for the classes in the various districts. The Parliamentary Committee has been commissioned to report on an Educational Policy for Labour. It is for Plebs everywhere to see, by agitation wherever and whenever possible, that the demand for a policy of Independent Working-Class Education is made clearly and forcefully. By doing propaganda work in your branch-room and in the columns of your Union journal (and in this connection, our new PLEBS pamphlet exists to be made use of); by getting your branch to forward resolutions to their Executive; by using any and every means to gain *Trade Union support* for the Colleges, you will be helping, not only to put them on a sound basis, but also to implant in the organised Labour movement *a clearer consciousness of its own aims and a firmer resolution to see them carried into effect.*

* * *

The Labour College's advertisement on p. iii of our cover this month suggests one way in which you can render practical help. Does your Union support the College? If not, what can you do to get it to participate in the *The Kew Building Scheme at Kew?* The upkeep of the Labour College for *Scheme* England and Wales ought not to be left to two Unions, however powerful. Every Union, in proportion to its strength, should bear its share of the responsibility and secure its share of the advantages. Already, in the *A.E.U. Journal*, as we are glad to note, class-conscious engineers are urging on their fellow-members the desirability of supporting the Labour College and Independent Working-Class Education. We look to our A.E.U. readers to see to it that that demand increases in force. This month the Durham miners will decide for or against an alteration of rules enabling them to support the Labour College. Surely the magnificent work accomplished by the North-Eastern District classes during the past two years will suffice to convince Durham workers of the urgency of this matter of Independent Working-Class Education. In both these cases—engineers and Durham miners—the appeal of the College Governors for support for the new Building Scheme puts forward a practicable way of participating in the control, and in the benefits, of the College.

* * *

The British Labour movement, with the honourable exception of certain sections, has neglected this vital matter of its own education too long. Within the past two or three years the provincial classes have increased *Wake up, Labour!* tremendously in numbers and in influence. Central colleges, in London, Glasgow or elsewhere—adequately staffed, housed and financed—are an essential part of the educational movement. Organised Labour should take a pride in seeing to it not only that these are provided, but that they should more than bear comparison with the educational institutions financed by the employers. The organised Labour movement consists of individuals of whom you are one. Do YOUR bit!

LOUIS BLANC AND LOUIS PUJOL

R. W. Postgate, whose fascinating book, "Revolution: 1789 to 1906," was reviewed in last month's PLEBS, has promised to write for us a series of short biographical studies of revolutionary leaders. Here is the first, which deals with two very different men whom events, for a brief period, brought into touch with one another.

IN October, 1811, J. J. Louis Blanc was born. His father had been executed during the Terror, and the little boy learned to dislike and fear the Jacobins. He received the usual education of a boy of the middle classes, and in the reign of Louis Philippe came to Paris as a journalist. His was, perhaps, the first alert mind to be struck by the grim realities of the growing industrialism of France. While Godefroy Cavaignac, Armand Marrast and the other romantic Republicans of the time were contemplating the ideal Republic, re-



reading Rousseau and Robespierre, and fighting for the restoration of 1793, Louis Blanc did a strange and new thing. He went about the workshops collecting facts. He studied economic statistics. He saw the proletariat and capital already in opposition; but most of all he was struck by the suffering of the workers. In 1839 he published his greatest work, *The Organisation of Labour*, in which he outlined a system of co-operative workshops, supported by the State, which would eventually drive out the private capitalist and bring about what was then called "the Social Republic." These proposals he accompanied by a really able destructive analysis of the effects of capitalist competition and a nightmare-like picture of the capitalist struggle for existence in industry, where the competing workers and employers fight for life as the stifling prisoners did in the Black Hole of Calcutta. His book was like a thunderbolt in "advanced" circles. Edition after edition was called for, and the Republicans were forced to revise all their thoughts and programmes. From sentimental believers in violence they had to become, willy-nilly, the defenders of the

workers, with an industrial programme. Blanc easily became their most distinguished publicist and by his *History of the Revolution and History of Ten Years*, definitely joined himself with extreme Republicans and forsook his Girondin traditions.

A pleasant, if rather sterile, life of agitation was brought to a sudden end in the February of 1848. Unexpectedly, with the suddenness of a bomb explosion, the people of Paris rose, drove out the King and proclaimed the Republic. A haphazard list of names read to the crowd became the Provisional Government, and among these names was Louis Blanc's. With the exception of Albert, his doglike follower, all the rest were more "to the Right" than Blanc.

As the tumult abated slightly, this little, dapper, conceited man found himself in the rather alarming position of the representative of the proletariat. His position and mind remind one forcibly of those of a member of the National Guilds League to-day. He had a "plan" or a system to bring the revolution. He was not a worker himself, but he was anxious that the workers should adopt and criticise his plan, and was really willing to serve them. He was also notably unfit to be a revolutionary leader; he was as irresolute in action as he was fearless in theory. His first act, as would be a Guildsman's to-day, was to call together the representatives of the workers and ask them for their support and advice. He summoned the first Soviet—the Assembly of Workers' Delegates at the Luxembourg. But (unlike to-day) the assembly was not a meeting of obstinate and opinionated delegates of firmly-rooted workers' associations, but the chance representatives of an infantile proletariat. The working-class first began to acquire form and consciousness under Blanc's hands: the Luxembourg Assembly was an enormous and rather risky step forward. And so the delegates reflected the unripeness of the workers; they were unable to criticise or suggest—they accepted uncritically all Blanc said. They undertook certain trade union functions, and did a good deal of propaganda; for the rest, they confined themselves to going through Blanc's proposals, based on the *Organisation of Labour*, and approving them clause by clause. The completed report was handed to the National Assembly when it met.

But while the workers were sitting at Blanc's feet, their governors were not idle. The Right Wing gained an immense majority in the Assembly. Louis Blanc was excluded from the new Government. The Luxembourg report was ignored. After various provocations, the irresponsible leaders of the Paris clubs headed a foolish attempt to dissolve the Assembly, which met with disaster. The Luxembourg delegates withdrew from the public eye. At the same time, also, Louis Blanc's influence declined rapidly. The workers were convinced that his eloquent appeals to the members of the Chamber were useless and revolution was again brewing.

So when the storm burst and the bourgeois Republicans turned machine-guns on the proletarian insurrection of June, Louis Blanc had no share in the workers' revolt. He was taken by surprise and had nothing to do but make broken-hearted appeals in the Assembly. After the workers' defeat he fled to England.

Twenty years and more later, after the fall of Napoleon III, he returned to France. To his admirers it was like finding the charred stick of a used rocket. The brilliance and daring of the young man of '48 had vanished. Nothing was left but a garrulous and likeable little old gentleman, of Liberal views. He lived comfortably and easily in France until his death at the age of nearly 70, and when

the papers said "Louis Blanc's Death," it came to many as a strange and sudden reminder of their youth, of the days when their hopes were high and France and the Republic were young.

* * *

Louis Blanc was the living thought of the Revolution of '48. A few stray notes, preserved by chance, have kept for us some record of one of the actual leaders of the workers in the June battles. Hardly, perhaps, even a leader of that unorganised and dimly-conscious mass, but one whom accident placed in their front line. His name was Louis Pujol.

He was a typical Frenchman, a fellow of Cyrano de Bergerac. He knew nothing of social theory, or the class war, or the proletariat; courage and a touch of dramatic instinct were his only qualifications for leadership. Wine and women he loved, too much indeed, and bragging and rioting. But he saw a struggle going on and he threw his sword on the side of the weaker and joined in the great adventure of the Revolution.

He had spent many years as an army "bad lot," brave but undisciplined. 1848 brought him freedom. He was a violent orator and had published* before the June days a rather ranting *Prophecy of Days of Blood*, which shows a slight literary talent run to seed. Then the Assembly decided in June to close down the National Workshops, where thousands had found an insufficient livelihood, and let the workers starve, and wages reach their economic level. The workers, led by the delegates of the Luxembourg Assembly, showed they were going to fight. They demanded an interview with Marie, Minister of Public Works, and a delegation was introduced, headed by Pujol.

Marie was a whiskered, flabby-faced bureaucrat, who, like many weak men, took refuge in violent language. Pujol had hardly begun his speech when Marie interrupted him, saying he would not hear a man who had taken part in the earlier attempt to dissolve the Assembly. He pushed Pujol aside and asked the other delegates to speak. At once Pujol was awake: "No one speaks here before I do," he cried. The delegates murmured their support. Marie angrily said: "Are you this man's slaves?" Pujol replied: "You are insulting the people's delegates." Then Marie lost his temper. "Your heads are turned. It is Louis Blanc's system. We won't have it." Pink with rage, he seized Pujol's arm and shouted—"Do you realise you are speaking to a member of the Executive Power?"

Pujol threatened to withdraw, and Marie calmed down long enough to let him make a short speech about the February revolution and the misery of the workers. Then, finally, Marie spat out this—"Listen to this! If the workers refuse to obey the Assembly, we shall make them by force—by force, do you understand?"

The delegation left and Pujol reported the interview to the packed crowds in the street. He named 6 o'clock that evening (June 22) as the time for a final meeting in the Place du Panthéon, and 5,000 or more met there and swore "to be faithful to the holy flag of the Republic." They formed a column which marched through the East End of Paris by torchlight, collecting recruits till it reached some ten thousand. Late at night, in the Place du Panthéon, Pujol dismissed them with the words: "To-morrow here at 6 o'clock."

* P. 211 of my *Revolution*: 1789 to 1906.

Next morning Pujol and his followers kept their appointment. He watched for a little while in silence the enormous, fluctuating crowd; then called on them to follow him. He led them to the place where the Bastille had once stood. He stood on the plinth of the column built to celebrate its fall, and reminded the crowd that they were at the tomb of the first martyrs to liberty. At his demand they bared their heads and every man knelt. Then he said:

"Heroes of the Bastille! The heroes of the barricades have come to kneel at the foot of the monument erected to make you immortal. Like you, they have made a revolution at the price of their blood. But their blood has been barren. The revolution must be begun again." Then he turned his eyes down to the people. "Friends, our cause is that of our fathers. They carried on their banners the words: Liberty or Death. Friends—Liberty or Death!"

Then he led them up the boulevard to the Rue St. Denis. Here the column stopped and chiefs, appointed how we do not know, led detachments which scattered across the city, building barricades. In an hour Paris bristled with well-defended barricades.

The rest of the story is three days' savage battle with the Paris garrison, ending with a proletarian defeat, rounded off by the shooting of prisoners, arrests and deportations. Pujol, who fought bravely with the rank and file, was to be deported to Cayenne, but his sister was able to get Louis Bonaparte to consent to his being imprisoned at Toulon. Soon after he was included in a general amnesty, but had to fly in 1853 to Spain, where he took part in the abortive Spanish Revolution. The Madrid Junta gave him the post of "Historiographer," but when the revolution collapsed he had to fly again and arrived in London at the end of 1855.

He very nearly starved there, but lived by teaching. And he was also unfortunate in his love affairs for the first time. One of his mistresses ran away with her own brother. He finally "married in the English manner" (say the notes of his life, maliciously) a pretty and silly English girl. Restless as ever, he went with this mistress to America. What happened to him I do not know. It is said that he died in the Mexican war. But the last we really know of him is that he left for America in the year 1858.

Then he passes out of our sight, a wine-lover, a woman-lover, and a braggart, but a brave and honest man, a private whom accident made a leader. One out of many forgotten, whom chance has caused to be remembered, he vanishes from our knowledge with a laugh and the snatch of a bawdy song.

Bibliographical: Louis Blanc: *Organisation du Travail* (Clarendon Press, 5s.), *Histoire de Dix Ans* (O.P.), *Histoire de la Révolution de 1848* (O.P.), *Histoire de la Révolution Française* (O.P.), and innumerable lesser works. In my *Revolution*, 1789 to 1906, Documents 68 and 84 give his own outline of his system.

Louis Pujol: Document 94 in my *Revolution* (his "Prophecy"). *Bulletin de la Société d'Histoire de la Révolution de 1848*, I, 133 (notes of an interview with Balaqué, a friend of Pujol's).

R. W. POSTGATE.

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THREE CENTURIES

JACOBIN, '93. COMMUNARD, '71. BOLSHEVIK, '17

This article by T. A. Jackson, organiser of the North Eastern Labour College District, originally appeared in "The Socialist," March, 18, 1920. It has been revised and partly re-written. The decisive victories of the Red Armies of Russia over all invaders give it a special interest at the present time

TO commemorate the martyred Paris Commune of 1871 has for long been an indispensable annual ritual with the militants of the proletariat. On sentimental grounds alone the twenty or thirty thousand victims of the bourgeois "restoration of order" make an imperative claim upon the memory of all professing any respect for the aspirations of the workers "rightly struggling to be free." And the fact that the Commune during its three months of life flew as its flag the "Red" of the International Republic, has made it a point of honour for all enlisted under that banner to keep green its memory.

It is not often noted that those most punctilious in their performance of this ritual of Commune celebration are just the ones who most generally incur the condemnation of being "too hard," "too material," "too narrow," and "too dogmatic." And still less has it been noted how wide is the difference between the theoretical outlook of those who revere and the Communards whose memory they preserve. How comes it that the "narrow" Marxist who is "intolerant" of theoretical differences is so tolerant of these? How is it that the "material" Marxist who is contemptuous of "sentimentality" "sentimentalises" over the Commune of '71?

The answer is that, critics notwithstanding, there is no such thing as a Marxian Dogma—even though fools (notoriously difficult to exclude!) have sought to father their folly upon Marx. Marxism is NOT a series of propositions or intellectual concepts to be used as instruments for dividing the Sheep of Orthodoxy from the Goats of Damnation. It is a METHOD of handling and classifying the facts of social experience, past, present, and to come. For the Marxist (rightly so called) an event is of importance as a manifestation of social tendencies—as something which has grown out of something, and from which in turn something will result. And it is in his analysis of this process of transformation, and his discriminations between apparent and real likenesses, differences, and interconnections, that the Marxist proves his worth.

Is the Commune, for example, to be understood as caused by the *theories* of the Communards or by the whole circumstances of the period of which these *theories* were an essential ingredient? That this is no mere academic question will be seen if we ask the same question about the Soviet Republic of Russia. Is this the outcome of the *theories* of Lenin, or are these theories themselves social products and forces whose rise and extension is conditioned by the whole social circumstances of modern Europe?

The historic incidents which led to the establishment of the Commune of '71 are sufficiently well known to readers of the PLEBS. What needs emphasis is the lesson taught by the Commune—taught by its success as well as its failure.

The Theory of the Commune

When, as a result of a spontaneous movement of resistance to counter-revolution, the Central Committee of the National Guard (raised during the siege and predominantly proletarian in its composition) found itself sole

governing authority of Paris, the first question on the agenda was what to do with the power which had dropped unsought into its hands. The holding of an election was inevitable in any case, and a Town Council, or its French equivalent, a "Commune," was, because customary, the most natural form in which to express the ideas or ideals in the minds of those upon whom circumstances had thrust the duty of a decision. To elect a Town Council was a matter of course; what called for deliberation was the problem of the relations between Paris and the rest of France.

In proclaiming Paris an independent Commune, the newly-elected Council was in no wise aiming at a parody of the typical institution of the later mediæval times. The general theoretical standpoint of the Commune was that of Humanitarian Democracy. Mingled with this, modifying and colouring its mode of expression, was the typical Parisian tradition—the memory of the Jacobins of the great French Revolution. That the "will of the people" should prevail was their first great intention, and hence their thoughts turned naturally to the theoretical high-water mark of Jacobin Democracy—the Constitution of '93. In that Constitution (beautifully planned but never enforced) provision was made for giving perfect expression to the "will of the people." The electors would meet in their primary assemblies in every district, and not merely select a delegate to the National Assembly (as well as the local Magistrates), but discuss and decide upon the mandate to be given him. Laws would be initiated in the primary assemblies, and thus would be created not merely "representative government," but "direct legislation."

The Commune, with a similar ideal in view, made its appeal to France at large. Had that appeal met with a sympathetic response, each local district and municipality would have constituted itself an independent self-governing unit. Then the units in a province would federate, as would the provinces in their turn, and so constitute a Federal whole. Thus would have been created the Federal Republic, for which Paris fought and bled—a Republic in which the armed people had replaced the standing army, the Communal delegates the functionaries of the Central State, and the Federal Council derived from the Communes was a machine of co-ordination replacing an instrument of coercion.

Jacobin and Commune

The points of resemblance between this and the Jacobin Constitution are fairly obvious. Their differences are none the less noteworthy. They are alike in their "democratic" provision of machinery to enable the common citizen to express his will to the exclusion of all prescriptive rights and privileges; a likeness that finds expression also in their common enthusiasm for formula. "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." They differ widely in their resultant form. For the Jacobin the Assembly of Delegates, equipped with imperative mandates, would become the constituted authority of the Republic—one and indivisible. The local administration, therefore, would be by means of functionaries appointed by and acting for this constituted authority.

For the Commune the problem was less one of breaking the power of tyrants than of creating the power of the common people (by now predominantly proletarian). The interdependence of craft and craft, of town and country, of factory, shop, and home—in a word, the economic structure into which the individual "citizen" fitted as a part of a complex whole, had forced itself upon the practical recognition of all in the social strife of the previous half-century.

Communism in one or other of its forms had claimed the allegiance of a large percentage of the proletariat. It still tended to move within the framework of the old concepts in that it seldom passed beyond the stage of a doctrinaire panacea capable of ready-made application, or that of denunciation of the want of "justice" or "equality" or "harmony" in the distribution of social products.

Hence, in place of the Republic, one and indivisible, of the Jacobin, the theorists of the Commune offered the Republic, Federal and Social. For the Jacobin the unit of society was the "individual"—the citizen. For the Communard the unit was the local association—the Commune. For the Jacobin the Central State was supreme; for the Communard, the locality.

Proletarian Consciousness and Jacobinism

The difference between the Jacobin ideal and that of the Communard was further emphasised by the existence in Paris, in addition to the Utopians of the schools of Fourier and Cabet, of a small but active minority aware of the social basis of this above-noted contrast. To the Jacobin human society was composed of a number of individuals all of whom possessed the same characteristic, "human nature." Man being naturally virtuous, only the imperfection and injustice of social institutions prevented the reign of Justice, Reason and Equality.

The experience of nearly eighty years of social striving, including the street battles of Thermidor and Vendémiaire, the "whiff of grape-shot," the July and February revolutions, the "days of June," the coup d'état of Napoleon the Little, and the September revolution after Sedan, had helped a few to the recognition of the fact that human society concealed beneath its fair "equalitarian" exterior the reality of a dominant bourgeoisie, whose "right" to property was one of the "sacred, inalienable rights" the great Revolution had won. Given the "right" to bourgeois property, with the co-relative fact of a proletariat subject to the vicissitudes of the labour market, and the "right of insurrection" when claimed by these latter was apt (in Marx's phrase) to translate "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" into "Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery." To infringe the sacred right of property by strikes, trade unions, or other "seditious conspiracies in restraint of trade" was to threaten the well-being of the Republic. The Jacobin theory was thus revealed as an expression of the class aspirations of the bourgeoisie alone. This once perceived, it became possible to formulate a proletarian morality and policy in opposition to the ideology of the Bourgeois State. Such social theorising as there was in opposition to the prevailing order was naturally most popular with proletarians, and received in its turn an impress at their hand.

The theory that the Great Revolution had made the earth "safe" for the "people" was opposed by the theory that the revolution was yet to be completed in a Proletarian Sense. The International Working-Men's Association had appeared, and stimulated alike the practical and theoretical activity of the proletariat. The outlook of the Commune accordingly differed from that of Jacobinism in that it contained in quasi-Jacobin forms a content of strong proletarian *class-consciousness*. In place of that of a social "structure" of unit-individuals arose the concept of a social "organism," of functioning groups and classes. For the fight between "Human Nature" and "Tyranny" there was substituted the class struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie. And it was so because in the interval a new social fact had emerged—bourgeois mass production with the concomitant interdependence of the proletarians and their subordination to the production process.

Viewed in this light, the Federal Republican ideal represented the political consciousness of the proletariat, still entangled in the forms inherited from the revolutionary period of the bourgeoisie.

"Right" and Revolution

This, perhaps, becomes most apparent if we compare the Commune with a contemporary event—the Russian Revolution. In this case, also, the bowels of human society have been wrung with agony at the thought of "violence," "disorder" and "outrage." We have had the same mechanical yelp of "anarchy" and the same denunciation of "tyranny" as formed the accompaniment to the Great Revolution and the Commune. And we have also had the curious phenomenon that men who started out primarily with a passion for peace, and a hatred of violence, have been forced to organise war on a colossal scale as the only alternative to annihilation by the forces of frantic counter-revolution.

In the Jacobin period none were more sincerely pacifist and universalist than the enthusiasts of the National Convention. None the less necessity drove them to the formation of the Revolutionary Army, the *levy en masse*, the military instrument which made possible the triumphs of Napoleon I.

In Russia a similar combination of reaction has forced the pacifist Trotsky to organise armies on a scale and with an efficiency which would have astonished Carnot (the "organiser of victory"), and to create in the "Red Army" a force which makes even the massed battalions of Dumouriez, Hoche, Jourdan, and Kellerman look puny. The parallel holds good in the case of the Commune. From the orgy of fraternal ecstasy with which they inaugurated their reign the Communards were rudely awakened by the shells of the Versaillaise "defenders of law and order," and so forced to put their "sentiments" in their pocket and fight for their lives—succeeding sufficiently well to make their last heroic death-struggle the classic instance of the proletarian revolutionist dying joyfully for the "magnificent dream" of the Solidarity of the Human Race.

It is not enough to become possessed of Government authority—the problem is to use it. And as Marx notes, nothing proves that better than the Commune. If social questions were decided automatically by the principle that "right is might" the Commune would have endured. The one thing the Commune lacked was the one thing needful—might; without which no right was ever considered, let alone recognised.

Outside of Paris the proletariat was nowhere, either in numbers or consciousness, *strong* enough to come to the rescue. The Versaillaise Government prevailed because it possessed the requisite strength. And it possessed it because social development had not yet sufficiently consolidated the proletariat in numbers, in economic function, and in understanding to enable them to undertake the revolutionary transformation of society.

The Theory of Revolution

The growth of the proletariat and the consequent intensification of the class antagonism had, naturally enough, provoked increasingly furious struggles for relief and betterment on the part of the subject and exploited class. The development of the technique of revolution is instructive. During the Great Revolution the citizens of Paris, organised in their sections and armed "in defence of the revolution," were, because of their numbers, unity, and organisation, coupled with the isolation of Paris (due to bad means of communication), able to enforce their will upon the National Assembly.

As the size of the standing army grew, and with it the complication of the administrative machinery, so necessarily those who contemplated revolution had to face the need for a bigger army of revolution and for undermining the morale of the Government troops. Both entailed something more than a meeting of a Jacobin Club or of electors convoked in their sections. They entailed propaganda and organisation on an elaborate scale. Hence, there was developed a system of clubs and secret societies contemplating naively the weakening of the force at the disposal of authority and the organisation of another able to seize the apparatus of office and rule in its stead.

This from 1825 to 1870 was, with varying modifications, the popular theory of revolution throughout the world. The clubs of '48, the League of the Just, and the Fenian Brotherhood all show the same general outlines, though their emotional content varies. The experience of the Commune, however, demonstrated past all doubt that the problem cannot be solved in so naive a fashion. The loyalty of the army is merely a symptom of the all but universal acceptance of a given form of government. Only when the mass of the population has lost all faith in Government institutions, and when, in addition, great and vital needs that demand a revolutionary transformation are clamouring for satisfaction, can a revolution be possible nowadays. The possibility of revolution thus rests on an economic foundation; the propaganda of revolution, awaiting economic development, is forced into legalist and Parliamentary channels.

But ripened economic development reveals the insufficiency not merely of bourgeois rule, but of the machinery thereof, and hence the revolutionary theory now must include a concept of a new machinery of revolution as well as a new machine of government.

What the "sections" of Parisian citizens were to the Great Revolution the "clubs" were to the '48 and '71. The clubs gave rise in turn to the political group or branch and the "syndicate" or trade union branch, and these in their turn have given rise to a new instrument of revolution—the Workers' Council—the Soviet. The development from Jacobin Section through Communist Club to the Revolutionary Soviet marks the transformation of society from the capitalist system to the Workers' Republic.

THOS. A. JACKSON

PLEASE NOTE

FEB. 12 & 13 THE PLEBS ANNUAL MEET WILL BE HELD AT BRADFORD, AND ALL MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS ARE HEREWITH CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND.

THE meeting on Saturday will open at 2.30 p.m. in the Co-operative Café (opposite Reformers' Bookshop, in Sunbridge Road), and continue till 7 p.m. (with half-hour tea interval). On Sunday, when League and Class organisation will be discussed, proceedings will open at 11.30 a.m. and continue till 3.30 p.m. The Sunday place of meeting will be the Textile Workers' Rooms, 3 Westgate.

Will all members intending to be present write to Mrs. COATES, 141 Girlington Road, Bradford, *before February 5*, to say exactly what accommodation they require? Bradford comrades have offered hospitality, but this is, of course, limited. Tea on Saturday (2s. 6d.), and light refreshments on Sunday, will be provided for those only who have previously notified Mrs. COATES.

THE PLEBS
PRODUCTION AND POLITICS

V

THE FEUDAL STATE

This article is the fifth of a series written by Walton Newbold for the PLEBS, the earlier instalments of which appeared in the June, July, Sept. and Nov. issues of last year. Its object is to show "the striking confirmation of the Materialistic Conception of History" which the author found in the course of studying "the nature and origins of British political institutions."

IN the last article we endeavoured to make clear the connection between arable cultivation and the accompanying property forms and local institutions prevailing in that stage of economic development. We had to deal with the secular institution of the manor and its ecclesiastical counterpart, the parish. Having concerned ourselves with these units of territorial administration, we must now proceed to examine the growth and structure of the contemporary State and discover, at the same time, what was the place of the Church in national life.

When the English settlers came to this country, and for some time afterwards, they were organised by tribes. For such information as we have about them we are mainly indebted to a vague and little understood record known as "the tribal hidage," which is supposed to have been compiled for Edwin of Northumbria as a basis of assessment for the imposition of a tax. Bede also gives certain particulars concerning the hidage or number of households in England in his days.

As we have already observed, the social unit was the family household occupying a *hide* of land. The unit of territorial administration was the township or *tything*, approximating to a formal ten hides. The next multiple was the *hundred* of ten times ten hides. This hundred was, at first, a social and military arrangement of families, but with the transition from Kinship to territorial polity it became an assessment not only of men for the host, but of tax-contributing tenements. The hundred had its *moot*, at the head whereof was the *ealdorman*, the head man of one hundred warriors of the host. This *ealdorman* was hereditary head of his own family, and the more or less freely chosen head of the other families in *tything* and hundred.

The turmoil of the Saxon Kingdoms and the long drawn-out anarchy of the northern lordships of Britain, which were eventually consolidated into the loose-hung and chaotic realm of Scotland, were occasioned by the inter-play of the forces of Kinship and the authority of the territorial state which was its historical heir.

Through the eighth and ninth centuries the kings of Wessex were striving, with varying degree of skill and of success, to weld a group of lordships into a territorial unity under a firmly established monarchy. King Ina in his famous *Dooms* or Laws first shows us an *ealdorman* under the guise of *scir-man* or *shire-man*. Alfred was the king who systematically set himself to cut up (*sciram*—to cut) his realm into administrative areas known as shires.

The shire, with its reeve or *sheriff* representing the king and sitting cheek by jowl with the *ealdorman* in the shire-moot, shows political society firmly rooted in the English land. Alfred deliberately depressed the status and authority of the folk-moot. He and his successors meanwhile strengthened and made a permanent court of the *Witenagemot* or Moot of the Wise, the

Council of Magnates whom a strong king selected from his entourage to advise him and whom a weak king found resolute to enforce their will upon him.

Alfred the Great is known to every product of our educational system. He is the first of the national heroes. He won his title more by his anti-popular and despotic bias than by ought else. Educated at Rome and surrounded by clerics, he was profoundly affected by the sanctions of the Church and the centralising influences of the Imperial Law with their bias against all things popular and pagan, and in favour of all that made for the absolute supremacy (under God) of the sovereign.

The Church of Rome, a church whose institutions and ideas reflected an economy and a society which had experienced centuries of private property and political organisation, a church whose doctrines and ritual epitomise the mental reactions of ages and of continents, played an enormous part in the dismantling of Kinship society and the upbuilding of the territorial state. It contributed an idea concerning centralisation and a sanction for external authority which sapped at the very roots of popular custom and brought an enduring protection to over-lordship. There was no escape from him who could bind not only on earth, but in Heaven.

The Roman Church could not for many centuries enforce celibacy upon the parish priests and the secular clergy in general. It could not isolate its pastors from their Kith and Kin, divide them from their families and attach them to the mythical bride, the Church. It could not make of these a close corporation. For fully six centuries the territorial lord, the manorial lord, kept the Church at arm's length in the ecclesiastical counterpart of his earthly lordship, until gradually the monastic orders, the ecclesiastical courts and the royal authority succeeded in setting up an independent patron in the parish.

But all the time the Church of Rome was served by monks who were loyal only to the discipline of their orders, and whose houses were garrisons of the Universal Church. The Roman monastic orders were composed of men having no kin but Christ. Kings, as well as the Church, desired that monastic orders should have no loyalties entangling them with feudal factions.

The approach of the year 1000 A.D. witnessed a reformation within the Church and the institution of the sterner discipline of the Cluniac Order, the manumission of slaves and the foundation of many monasteries, some forty of which were established in the reign of Edgar. The kings, about this time, assumed imperial titles. Ethelred was declared to be "Christ's vice-gerent among Christian people." Knut's subjects were bidden "that above all things, they should ever love and worship one God, and unanimously observe one Christianity, and love King Canute with strict fidelity."

By the close of the 10th century the institution of kingship in England had attained permanency and recognition from the congeries of thegns, who exercised lordship in the manors throughout the southern part of the island.

Twice a year, at Christmas and Easter, there came together to counsel the king, the Witenagemot, comprising not only the favoured thegns of his retinue, but also the ealdormen of the shires and the abbots and bishops of the Church. This body, in its capacity of grand council of the realm, and in succession to the popular assemblies of an earlier time, had the right of appeal in juridical cases, of sanctioning the imposition of extraordinary measures of taxation, such as Danegeld and "the power of recommending, assenting to, and

guaranteeing grants of land, and of permitting the conversion of folk-land into book-land."

During and between the occasional sessions of this council, there was, with the development of kingship and the authority of the central government ramifying through the shire-courts, need of a bureau of secretaries and a corps of accountants in the king's household. In addition to the high-steward or mayor of the palace, who acted as glorified bailiff or regent in the king's absence, developing into the Justiciar of the early Norman monarchy, and the Chamberlain who took charge of the royal bed and bath and looked after the Wardrobe (wherein the monarch kept—as close to his bed as possible—his robes, his jewels and his treasure) there was his father confessor who, acting as his private secretary, developed into his Chancellor—*i.e.*, the man behind the screen. These functionaries became heads of departments as the State expanded.

At first, the king supported himself and his household by contributions, mainly in kind, from (i) the royal manors, (ii) the Crown lands, (iii) the public lands which were rapidly being absorbed into or treated as Crown property. In the troublous times of the Danish Wars, the Witan granted him a *geld* or tax imposed upon land, which was to be used in the defence of the realm and was not to be collected save to meet the specific charge of encountering or buying off the Danes. As a matter of fact, the king calculated the necessities of defence on a liberal basis and succeeded in making Danegeld into a permanent source of revenue. In addition, he had a part of the moneys levied as fines in the shire-courts.

In the reign of Edgar we learn of royal decrees for the fixing of uniform weights and measures and of the regulation of coinage throughout the realm—all evidence of foreign trade and of the interchange of commodities between manor and manor. The Danish invasion and the establishment of a Danish dynasty at Westminster brought England in general and London in particular into touch with Northern Europe, so that about 1000 A.D. we find a shipmen's guild in London and learn that three voyages across the North Sea in his own ship made a merchant thegn-worthy.

Until incipient commerce brought money into the realm, providing an economic as well as an arbitrary political link between the manors of which the realm was made up, the king must have found it well-nigh impossible to weld together his dominions, save for war, and extremely difficult to collect his revenues and to accumulate a hoard. England before the Conquest produced little of exchange-value. Every manor was practically self-contained, and even the arms and armour of war were simple articles of local origin. Leather, horns, skins, and, maybe, herring would be among the few commodities of commerce. In an economy such as this, no wonder that the king could keep his money in a closet off his bed-chamber!

But by the 11th century, the Wardrobe became inadequate, and, instead of carrying his money around with him, the king deposited a strong box in the keep of Winchester Castle and appointed a Treasurer with a staff of clerks to assist him. Now, the main Crown officers consisted of:—Justiciar, Chamberlain, Treasurer and Chancellor. After the Norman Conquest, these officers of state become more clearly visible, and in place of the Witenagemot we have the Great Council of the Realm, or *Curia Regis*, meeting once or twice a year under the presidency of the king or his regent, the Justiciar. In the 11th and 12th centuries there was no recognised theory of government

defining the relations between the King's Ministers and the King's Council. Practice precedes theory, if not in philosophy, at any rate in history.

William the Norman maintained the laws and customs of King Edward the Confessor substantially intact; contrary to the notions of school-book history made no wholesale confiscations; continued the Anglo-Saxon *fyrð* or *levy en masse* as a counterpoise to the feudal army of his Norman retainers; and made all the great earldoms and baronies into *fiefs* of the Crown. He re-imposed the Danegeld, not as a war measure, but as a convenient source of permanent revenue, a land-tax calculated on the basis of cultivated plough-lands; and to make the collection sure he ordered the compilation of "a rent-book of valuation of all the land in the Kingdom," with particulars of the tenures and rents due from these in the time of King Edward the Confessor. The record was kept in the Treasury at Winchester and became known as Domesday Book—the book of the "dooms" of tenures and rents by which the officers of the Crown could calculate and check their revenues.

With this as a basis on which to estimate the taxable resources of the realm, the king was able to augment his income from the "casualties" of feudal law, viz., fines in the Courts, fines on succession to estates, and "aids" due to the superior. The Domesday Survey enabled the king to levy contributions on his fifteen hundred tenants-in-chief almost as effectively as they laid contributions on their own tenantry. But whilst they could take toll of their tenantry in labour-service and in kind, their superior found it well-nigh impossible to take his tribute in these forms. The king needed to take his exactions in their monetary equivalent and to estimate them in the same universal medium.

The Norman kings maintained and strengthened the power of the sheriffs in the county courts, making these local deputies of the sovereign the intermediaries through whom rents and taxes were remitted to the Court of Exchequer en route to the Treasury. This Court of Exchequer was a department established by Henry I at Westminster, to which the sheriffs came twice a year to render account and to pay in their moneys to the royal officers. In this Court were two departments, the Exchequer of Receipt and the Exchequer of Account. The Court took its name from the figured cloth on which the clerks worked out their accounts.

The next step forward in administration was for the king to send the Barons of the Exchequer on circuit to the shire courts to supervise the administration of justice, to make close inquiry into the customs and to ferret out means whereby the royal revenues might be depleted or augmented. Stubbs throws an interesting beam of light across the material foundations of our political institutions when he remarks:—

So intimate is the connection of judicature with finance under the Norman kings, that we scarcely need the comments of the historians to guide us to the conclusion that it was mainly for the sake of the profits that justice was administered at all. . . . The value of justice depended in his (Henry I) eyes very much on the amount of treasure with which it supplied him. (*Constitutional History of England*, Vol. I, p. 418.)

The Barons of the Exchequer presiding in the shire courts provided "the link between the old and new organisations of the country by which that concentration of local machinery was produced, out of which the representative system arose."

So we see the beginning of that wonderful and mysterious High Court of

Parliament, with its legislative and its judicial functions grounded in that most material question of exacting and contributing the monetary equivalent of the rents and services due from the tenant in chief to his sovereign lord the king. We see the ancient and venerable constitution of this realm of England being built as a system for exacting tribute from tenants who in turn exacted tribute from other tenants who pushed the plough across the acre-strips of the prevailing manorial economy.

J. T. WALTON NEWBOLD

(To be continued.)

REVOLUTIONARY TACTICS

By FRIEDRICH ENGELS

(Translated from the German by Eden and Cedar Paul)

(Continued)

AT that time (1848) there were many confused sectarian gospels, each advocating its own peculiar panacea; to-day there is but one theory which receives universal recognition, the theory of Marx, lucidly clear, formulating in sharp outline the ultimate aims of the struggle. At that time there existed unorganised masses, broken up into sections by the barriers of space and of nationality, united solely by the bond of common sufferings, undeveloped, vacillating betwixt enthusiasm and despair; to-day we see the one great international army of Socialists, marching irresistibly forward, increasing daily in numbers, improving daily in organisation, discipline, perspicacity, and confidence of victory. Even now this mighty army has by no means attained its goal; even now it is still far from being able to achieve victory in a single great battle, but must advance slowly from position to position, fighting strenuously all the while; and this proves once for all how impossible it was in 1848 to bring about the social revolution simply by a surprise attack.

The French bourgeoisie was split into two royalist factions, but needed above all else tranquillity for the conduct of its monetary affairs. Confronting the bourgeoisie was the proletariat, vanquished but still threatening, and supported to an increasing extent by the lower middle classes and the peasantry. A violent outbreak appeared ever imminent, and yet there was no prospect that the rising would lead to a conclusive settlement. Such was the situation, and it seemed expressly created for the *coup d'état* of Louis Bonaparte, the pseudo-democratic pretender. Aided by the army, on December 2, 1851, he put an end to the strained situation, securing for Europe internal tranquillity, to bestow on it in return a new series of wars. The period of revolutions from below had closed, and there ensued a period of revolutions from above.

The imperialist reaction of 1851 furnished fresh proof of the immaturity that characterised the proletarian aspirations of the day. But this reaction was itself to create the conditions under which the proletarian aspirations could ripen. Internal tranquillity safeguarded the development of industry, whilst the need for finding the army something to do, and the need for giving revolutionary impulses an outward trend, gave rise to the wars by means of which Bonaparte, under the pretext of furthering the "principle of nationality," endeavoured to filch territory for France. His imitator, Bismarck, adopted the same policy for

Prussia; like Bonaparte, he carried out a *coup d'état*, effecting in 1866 a revolution from above in opposition to the Germanic Federation and to Austria, and no less in opposition to the unruly Prussian legislative chamber. But there was no room in Europe for two Bonapartes, and the irony of history determined that Bismarck was to overthrow Bonaparte, and that King William of Prussia was to establish, not merely the German empire, but also the French republic. The general upshot, however, was to bring about the independence and internal unification of the great nations, with the exception of Poland. Of course these changes were effected within somewhat modest limits, but at least they went so far that the natural evolution of the working class was no longer seriously hampered by nationalist complications. The gravediggers of the revolution of 1848 had become its executors. And by their side, with menacing mien, was already arising the heir of 1848, the proletariat, organised in the International.

After the war of 1870-71, Bonaparte vanished from the scene. Bismarck's mission was fulfilled, and he could now lapse to the level of an ordinary junker. The close of the epoch, however, was signalled by the Paris Commune. A malicious attempt by Thiers to deprive the Paris national guard of its artillery provoked a victorious rising. Once more it became apparent that now the only possible revolution in Paris was a proletarian revolution. After the victory, power passed spontaneously and without challenge into the hands of the working class. But once again was it to be demonstrated that even now, more than twenty years after the February revolution, it was impossible for the working class to retain power. On the one hand, France left Paris in the lurch, looking on whilst the revolutionists bled to death under the fire of MacMahon's rifles; on the other hand the strength of the Commune was dissipated in the barren struggle between two opposing factions, that of the Blanquists, who formed the majority, and that of the Proudhonists, who formed the minority—barren because the members of neither faction knew the right thing to do. The easy victory of 1871 proved no less sterile than had the surprise attack of 1848.

It was the general belief that the fighting proletariat had been finally buried under the ruins of the Paris Commune. Far from this, it was from the Commune and the Franco-German war that the most striking advance of the proletariat must be dated. The complete transformation of warfare which resulted from the enrolling of the entire eligible manhood of the nation in an army which henceforward had to be numbered in millions, in conjunction with the development of firearms, projectiles, and explosives of an efficiency hitherto unparalleled, brought the epoch of the Bonapartist wars to a pitiful conclusion, and ensured the peaceful development of industrial life, seeing that it made war henceforward impossible unless it were a world-wide war of unexampled atrocity and incalculable extent. On the other hand, since the cost of preparedness for war increased in geometrical progression, taxation rose to an intolerable figure, and thereby the poorer classes were driven into Socialism. The annexation of Alsace-Lorraine, the immediate cause of the insane competition in armaments, induced the French and the German bourgeoisie to engage in mutual recriminations and jingoistic incitations; but for the workers in the two countries it was a fresh bond of union. Moreover, the anniversary of the Commune of Paris became the first general festival of the united proletariat.

As Marx had foretold, the war of 1870-71 and the defeat of the Commune had, for the time being, transferred the centre of gravity of the European

working-class movement from France to Germany. As far as France was concerned, many years had obviously to pass before the workers could recover from the blood-letting of May, 1871. In Germany, on the other hand, where manufacturing industry was developing ever more rapidly under the hothouse stimulus of the French milliards, the growth of social democracy was yet more rapid and more enduring. Thanks to the agreement which enabled the German workers to exercise the right of universal [manhood] suffrage, introduced in 1866, the astounding growth of the party was made obvious to the whole world by indisputable figures. The Socialist vote was 102,000 in 1871; 352,000 in 1874; 493,000 in 1877. Next came the authorities' recognition of this progress, a recognition which took the form of the Socialist Law. For the moment the party was shattered, so that in 1881 the vote had fallen to 312,000. But the lost ground was speedily recovered. Under the pressure of the exceptional law, without a Socialist Press, with no recognised organisation, and without the right of public meeting, none the less the diffusion of Socialist ideas went on more rapidly than ever. In 1884 the vote was 550,000; in 1887, 763,000; in 1890, 1,427,000. Then the grip of the State relaxed. The Socialist Law was repealed, and the Socialist vote rose to 1,787,000, this being more than one-fourth of the total votes. The Government and the ruling classes had used all the means at their disposal, and had used them without avail. The unmistakable proofs of the powerlessness of the authorities were numbered by millions—in the persons of the despised workers. The State was at an end of its resources, but the workers had only just begun to use the resources at their disposal.

The German workers had done something more than merely demonstrate their existence as the strongest, best disciplined, and most rapidly growing Socialist party in the world. They had done a greater service than this. Into the hands of their comrades in all lands they had put a new weapon, and one of the sharpest, for they had shown how to make a right use of universal suffrage.

(To be continued.)

TEN-MINUTES' TALKS WITH NEW STUDENTS

IV.—WHAT DO YOU DO WITH YOUR TIME?

A HUNDRED years ago the Bosses were able to keep their workers in the factories as long as they pleased. Twelve, thirteen, fourteen and even fifteen-hour working-days were quite common. Clearly, the workers of that period had no time in which to think out their own problems, to do anything for themselves. All their waking hours were occupied in making profits for the Bosses.

To-day most workers are not required to spend more than eight hours per day in the Boss's service; so if we allow another eight for sleep, we find eight hours left which the worker can devote to the bettering of his conditions of life. Does the worker do justice to himself by doing justice to those eight hours? Does he appreciate the value of his spare time—*his* time?

Whether he does or not, there is no doubt that the Boss puts a great value on his share of the worker's day, namely, the worker's working time. Nothing hurts him more than to see it wasted, so, just as the men living by the Nile employ

Irrigation to make sure that not a drop of water goes astray, the Boss employs Scientific Management to ensure that not a minute of the worker's working time is lost.

Nowadays he is not content merely to engage a man to see that the worker comes into the factory at the right time and does not leave a minute before the stipulated hour. He employs much more highly-paid men to see that not a moment is wasted inside the workshop. For the same purpose he employs the most ingenious machines, machines that register the time taken to do a job. Not only does he watch closely the labour-time he gets from the workers inside the factory, but he also wants to take equal care of the time of the relatively small proportion of workers employed outside the factory. According to a recent issue of a commercial paper, which exists, of course, in order that the Bosses may exchange tips on How to Exploit, it appears that they have discovered a nice little machine that will put a check on the waste of time on the part of motor drivers who are far from the foreman's eye. We're told that—

the instrument consists of a small circular dial actuated by clockwork and making a complete revolution every twenty-four hours. On this dial is secured a chart, the rim of which is divided into twenty-four hours and the hours into quarters. A pencil is suspended above the chart, and when the vehicle is in motion the vibrations cause the pencil to swing and a heavy black line is made. When the vehicle ceases to run the pencil also ceases to function and, as the chart continues to revolve, a white space is left until such moment as the machine is again moving along the road.

Suppose the runs were from Edinburgh to Glasgow and back, the Boss, on inspecting the chart, could see how long the double journey occupied, while the white blanks would tell him how long the driver took to unload and how many times he stopped on the road to quench his thirst!

The worker's working time is, indeed, precious in the eyes of the Boss. Is his spare time—*his* time—as precious in his own eyes? The Boss sees that the worker's working time is directed to his end, the making of profits. Does the worker direct his time to *his* end, the sweeping away of the profit-making system? Ability to alter a system of Society intelligently doesn't come by nature. Last month we saw that the worker can do little without a knowledge of social science. To get that knowledge he must attend classes provided for the purpose, and be *as regular in his attendance there as he is at the Boss's factory*. In other words, he must mind his own business as faithfully as he minds the business of the Boss.

What do you do with *your* time?

J. P. M. MILLAR

THE MINERS' NEXT STEP: A REPLY

The following is one of the most interesting replies we have received to the Questionnaire published in the December PLEBS. We hope next month to summarise some of the many others to hand.

Nationalisation

1 The splendid lead of the 1918 Coal Commission was not followed up as it should have been.

(a) Granting that the apathy exists, it is to be explained by the successful press propaganda of the Coal Owners' Association, while the men's

leaders as a whole were either too occupied with other affairs or not sufficiently enthusiastic about the scheme themselves to make it a real live thing.

(b) In my estimation the active minority were suspicious of what nationalisation would mean and again in concentrating on wage-demands they were following the line of least resistance.

(c) Probably a bolder scheme, with compensation limited and more emphasis on control, would have helped a more successful campaign.

2 It will not be a choice between alternatives. Wages question will be sure to arise in the spring, with the National Wages Board. So far as the miners themselves are concerned, control of industry and troubles over wages cannot be separated. When the coalowners cry out that they cannot any longer carry on because of our demands, we reply "Get out and let us." The T.U.C. has already taken on the task of interesting the other unions and their members in the matter. Pass the ginger!

The Recent Crisis

3 The tactic of reducing prices must certainly be used in a controlled industry. One mistake was in not keeping our eyes on the £26 millions of guaranteed minimum profits instead of changing "the one and indivisible demand" to suit the Government arithmetic.

4 The divisions among the leaders of the Triple Alliance, representing, as we must admit, the divided opinion of their members, certainly played into the hands of the Government. The remedy? More local Triple Alliance rank-and-file activity. Synchronising of terminations of agreements and of action—more than has hitherto been attempted. The amalgamation of the Transport Workers is a step in the right direction.

5 The unpreparedness of the workers is made an excuse for much. If our leaders did not merely sit waiting to be beckoned to Downing Street, but spent more of their time during a crisis explaining the position and keeping high the temper of resistance in their members, this unpreparedness would soon be lacking. As things are now—a yellow merchant service and a rank and file still under the influence of a hostile press—the stoutest might well pause. To recognise the difficulties is the first step to their removal. Now we run away from them.

6 The Committees of Inquiry will achieve nothing lasting in the way of giving an incentive for increased production. They will, however, reveal how production and efficiency are lessened under capitalism by the action of both sides.

7 Favour the proposals mentioned. Systematic approach to all the "salaried" —managers and officials—might well be included. The active minorities cannot too soon work out their plans for their particular areas and avail themselves of the strike experiences. In the granting of permits to work for special classes of workers and in other matters there was discernible the beginning of the transference of power from the directors' office to the miners' lodge-room. The weapon of the "stay-in strike" will repay attention. A vigorous educational campaign against piecework is also needed. Discussions on, say, Hodge's book

and Hay's pamphlet would give life to the somewhat abstract appeal of the nationalisation cry. In the past the miners have been strongly placed, not only by virtue of being well organised, but also by the world shortage of coal. The overwork of the miners of the Ruhr and the increasing output of America, combined with the general slump, are likely to undermine that strong position. Therefore, the possibility of an attempted wage-cut on account of falling prices has got to be faced and can only be met by international action. This, too, will be necessary for getting the Six-Hour Day. Any survey of the future must also anticipate the changes coming from the use of oil and of the "white coal" of the rivers, as well as those in the methods of coal-getting itself.

KARBMINISTO

GEOGRAPHICAL FOOTNOTES TO CURRENT HISTORY

IV.—GERMAN WATERWAYS

ONE of the clauses of the Peace Treaty with Germany which has been comparatively little discussed is that which placed the four great German rivers—the Rhine, Danube, Elbe and Oder—under international control. The nominal reason for this was that all four "naturally provide more than one State with access to the sea" (and it should be noted that waterways—chiefly canalised rivers—are matters of much more economic importance on the Continent than in Great Britain). France and Switzerland, for example, touch the Rhine, as well as



Germany, while the mouth of the river is in Holland. The upper reaches of the Elbe are in Czecho-Slovakia, while the Oder traverses Silesia (whose final allotment to Germany or to Poland still remains to be settled). The Danube rises in Germany, but then flows through Austria, Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary, Jugo-Slavia, Rumania and Bulgaria to the Black Sea.

Now, though a real internationalisation of waterways, under the control of a real League of Peoples, would obviously be a step in the right direction, it was hardly to be expected that any such procedure was contemplated by the Treaty-makers of Versailles. "The Treaty," as Mr. J. M. Keynes put it in *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, "has made the international character of these rivers a pretext for taking the river system of Germany out of German control." And as France and Britain are well represented on the government of all these rivers, it is obvious that their powers of jurisdiction will be a very valuable lever in that "colonial exploitation" of Central and Eastern Europe which those two Western plutocracies are energetically developing.

Germany—or to be more precise, the German capitalist class—was unlikely to succumb to such exploitation without a struggle. A recent article in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* (for a translation of which we are indebted to W. H. Mainwaring) accordingly advocated the cutting of a canal, or canals—see dotted lines in our map—linking the Weser with the Main, which is already joined by canal with the Danube. By the internationalisation of the other main rivers, says the *Frankfurter*, the Weser

becomes the most important river in Germany, as no foreign control can be brought to bear on it. By this means, too, a link would be provided between the North and South of Germany, which, now more than ever, is important. The Weser and its connections must assist in the economic recovery of Germany.

At the mouth of the Weser is the Port of Bremen, the oldest seaport of Germany, and one of the great Hansa towns. The river runs through, or near, some of the most important industrial districts in Germany. Moreover, the new route (if completed) would, as the *Frankfurter* points out, have the additional advantage of forming a close economic link between North and South Germany; and that link, in view of French control of the Upper Rhine and French encouragement of separatist tendencies in the South, would very quickly assume political significance. An interesting "nationalist" reply to Allied "internationalism"!

J. F. H.

THE PLEBS BOOK DEPARTMENT

supplies any book reviewed or advertised in the PLEBS. *Cash must accompany orders.* Besides Kerr's publications and standard Socialist works, we have in stock such recent books as Mellor's *Direct Action* (post paid 4s. 10d.); Fairgrieve's *Geography and World Power* (post paid 5s. 5d.); Newbigin's *Aftermath: A Geographical Study of the Peace Terms* (post paid 3s. 8d.); Postgate's *Revolution, 1789-1906* (18s. 9d.); and *The Workers' International* (2s. 8d.); Woolf's *Economic Imperialism* (2s. 8d.); Muller-Lyer's *History of Social Development* (18s. 9d.); etc., etc.

¶ The PLEBS has also made arrangements for a *special cheap edition* (at 2s. 6d.) of Eden and Cedar Paul's *Creative Revolution*, hitherto published at 8s. 6d. Full particulars next month. *As the number printed will be strictly limited, send your orders now.*

We are also booking orders for the special cheap edition of Max Beer's *History of British Socialism*, 2 vols., post paid, 10s. 9d., which the National Labour Press hopes to issue shortly.

11a Penywern Road, Earls Court, London, S.W.5

ECONOMICS WITHOUT HEADACHES

II

WHEN all the capital has been secured or promised — because sometimes only a portion is needed at once and the rest may be called up as required—when the manager has been appointed and the workmen engaged, the company is in a position to begin producing goods. Some may be produced for a "chance" market, others made to definite order. In any case, they are sold, but not always paid for at once. It is customary for firms to have a regular pay-day—say on the 3rd of the month. Some firms allow their customers three months or so in which to pay. Because of this, a company must not tie up all its capital in "fixed" things like plant, buildings, and machinery, but must keep some "fluid" cash at the bank for wage and salary payments and incidental expenses. If it does not, it will have to borrow money and, of course, pay interest on its borrowings. However, as the firm can itself get raw materials, etc., without paying cash down, things tend to equalise. Learning how to defer making payments is almost a fine art—in order to keep as much in the bank as possible and so secure more interest; but many companies encourage prompt payments by making discounts.*

At the end of the year, the company issues a balance-sheet stating income, expenditure, profits, etc. On the expenditure side, some allowance has to be made for depreciation of machines, tools, and so on. It is obvious that a factory with machines worth £10,000 will find them worth much less twelve months later. Usually, on the assumption that machines last about ten years, 10 per cent. is set aside to make good the wear and tear. Leaving aside for the time being the rights and wrongs of capitalist production, this depreciation allowance is quite just, but many firms have a habit of overdoing it. Most of us have seen or worked in places into which new tools and equipment of a newer design were constantly being brought. When this is done systematically it sometimes works out after a number of years that the capital, as represented by the actual buildings and plant, is worth much more than the amount paid in by shareholders.

After due allowance is made for all expenses of production—including payment of wages—the directors are able to say how much profit has been made and to suggest to the shareholders how the profit shall be divided. In most cases the latter accept the suggestions made to them, but now and again an aggrieved shareholder demands more.

All the profits are not paid out in dividends—or not in a sound company. It is considered good policy to keep some in hand for emergencies and

* In this connection it is interesting to note how fond large companies are of keeping a "week in hand" of their workers' wages. The longer the worker waits for his pay the more interest the company gets on its bank balance.

so "reserve funds" are created. In one year profits may be very good and good dividends paid, with a fair sum placed to reserve; the following year, if trade has been bad, dividends can be helped up from that reserve. But suppose trade was good for a number of years, and the reserve fund was increased and increased, what would happen? Let me put it this way:—If a firm had a capital of £10,000, and each year for five years was able —after paying its dividends—to put to reserve £2,000, then 5×2 being 10, there would be £10,000 in reserve. This would, of course, be all in addition to the original £10,000 laid out in the factory. This new £10,000 would be left in a box under the managing director's bed, but would be banked or, perhaps, invested in another business at home or abroad. *In any case, it would bring in its own interest.* Thus there would be £20,000 of capital working for the shareholders who had paid in only £10,000. Dividends would be higher than ever, and the naughty workers would get to know of it and ask for higher wages, and so run the risk of becoming—well, you know what happens to workers who get high wages.

In order to prevent this calamity, the interesting process of giving free shares to the shareholders has been invented. If the reserve funds are equal to the original capital, then two capitals are at work, and the capital, *in actual fact*, has been doubled. So each shareholder who holds one £1 share receives one for nothing. Thus the declared capital of the company is twice as much as before and dividends that were 20 % henceforth are only 10 %. To the shareholder they are still 20 % on what he has paid in, but 10 % reads much more reasonable in the newspapers, and the workers, noting how small profits are, commune with each other and say, "If we took control of industry we should be only 10 % better off, and we should have to organise the whole business; we might as well let the capitalist do it and save ourselves the trouble."

All this is not imaginative writing. I could fill this number of PLEBS with instances taken from the Press during the last five or six years. One must suffice:—J. and P. Coats, the thread combine, found in 1901 that in addition to their capital of £5,000,000 they had a reserve fund of £5,000,000. Each shareholder was given a free share for every one he held, and the capital was then £10,000,000. For eighteen years 30 % was paid on this figure, equal of course to 60 % on what the shareholders had paid. In 1919 the reserve funds were up again to £7,500,000, so this time £2,500,000 was called for from the shareholders and the £7,500,000 turned into shares, making the capital into £20,000,000. If you will just go over this again you will find that the lucky shareholders have paid in £5,000,000 plus £2,500,000 = £7,500,000; but they own a concern worth £20,000,000, and their dividends are paid on this sum. Last month Coats' paid

17½ %; work out from the above what that really was.

Sometimes without juggling with the reserves, it is possible by the depreciation method already discussed, so to increase the value of a concern as to make it possible to "readjust" the capital in this way. The declared capital is brought up to the actual value of the assets. This is not "watering" the capital, it is not creating fictitious capital, it is saving some of the profits each year, keeping them aside and then turning them into capital. We will look at it theoretically later on.

All companies do not make profits. Sometimes by means of careless buying or by bad management things get into a bad way. Then

money has to be borrowed to enable the directors to carry on—that is unless they prefer to close down. Money so borrowed is obtained in some cases from Debenture shareholders. "Debentures" are a special kind of shares representing borrowed money, and those who hold them have first claim on the assets if a general sell-up is necessary. They are the bailiffs so to speak of the business world. A good stable company takes pride in the fact that it has no Debenture shareholders.

Read carefully a few company reports, taking note of the chairmen's speeches and of the figures given. Above all, try to work out what is meant by the speeches and figures.

W. McLAIN

'CORRESPONDENCE

ENGELS

DEAR COMRADE.—R. W. Postgate hardly seems to realise the very serious nature of the charge he has made against Engels—*i.e.*, of having abused the great influence he had with Marx for his own purposes. For this charge he relies on the evidence of hostile writers like Guillaume, the anarchist, whose aim in writing history was to prove Marx wrong throughout. Hyndman's testimony about Engels is absolutely worthless, since it is notorious that Engels never concealed his contempt for that garrulous gentleman and that he never even spoke to him.

That both Marx and Engels were often unjust in their judgements of other people can be freely allowed. In polemic they were no more exempt from exaggeration than any one else, and for this reason it is not necessary to accept their opinion of Lassalle, Bakunin, or Dühring. Indeed, Mehring pointed out that the time has long come when we Marxists could afford to do justice to men who were opponents of our great teachers, but on the other hand we have no need to believe what those men said of Marx or Engels.

As to the cock-and-bull story about Engels and his wife, I confess that I am obliged to speak from memory about the Marx-Engels letters—since my copy is not here; but my impression of the letters is that Engels always replied very promptly. And though help was not always possible on the spur of the moment, what he could do he certainly did in most loyal fashion. It would certainly have been hard for him to appeal to sentiment on the death of his wife—since he never had a wife, so far as I am aware. Moreover, the most lively impression I have of those letters is the absolute abhorrence of both men for the exhibition of anything like sentiment.

As to the relative share of Marx and Engels in the building up of the Marxian theory, Mehring, probably the best authority on the question, considers that Engels' own opinion was correct—that Marx had played the principal part and that his (Engels') share had been of a much more modest kind. But no one can read

the correspondence between the two men without seeing how enormously Engels helped Marx in the working out of his theories, and the editorial work which Engels did on the second and third volumes was no slight achievement.

Dr. Mayer's life of Engels (now appearing) will no doubt help to clear up many points, but there is not much to be gained by splitting hairs over the part played by each of the two men. There has certainly been no more fruitful literary partnership, and that after all is the important fact.

Yours fraternally,

J. B. ASKEW

[R. W. POSTGATE writes:—(1) The "charge against Engels" is not the one I made; (2) The "cock-and-bull" story will be found in the Correspondence of January, 1863. Askew should look up his references; (3) Engels was not legally married to Mary Burns, but why does Askew insist on a less pleasant term? (Engels "never had a wife"—Askew should really look up his references!); (4) I gave no facts whatever on the authority of Guillaume: I quoted a large number of authentic documents, some of which have been reprinted by Guillaume, some not. Askew should read the letter he is attacking; (5) You cannot ignore Hyndman's evidence because he went wrong later in politics, or because Engels did not like him. History is only written in that manner in Bedlam, and in Universities.]

NATIONALISM AND COMMUNISM

DEAR COMRADE,—The politics of the East are daily forcing themselves upon the attention of thinking Socialists; questions of external policy have, since the triumph of the Russian workers, become subjects for profitable discussion, and the PLEBS is to be congratulated on its Geographical Footnotes.

Mr. Brailsford recently contributed to the *Daily Herald* a stimulating article on the Baku question, which has a special appeal to those whose belief in the future of communism rests on an appreciation of the principles of social

development first propounded by Marx, and especially exemplified in the growth of Western civilisation; and all PLEBS readers would probably agree that so long as the Bolsheviks make use of the national antipathies of the East to consolidate their military position their policy is intelligible and consistent.

In this country, however, there are some whose antipathy to capitalist imperialism encourages a belief in short cuts in social development hardly compatible with the viewpoint of a scientific communist; they appear to regard the championship of any species of national hysteria as a badge of internationalism. The *Daily Herald* has for some time adopted an attitude of more or less theosophic sympathy to Gandhi's non-co-operation movement. Some time ago it reported with apparent approval the adoption by the Indian National Congress of a programme involving the following:—"Parents are to be called upon to withdraw their children under sixteen from state-aided schools; students of sixteen are to be called upon to withdraw from state-aided institutions . . . merchants and traders, in order to make India economically independent, are to be called upon to carry out a boycott of foreign trade relations and to encourage hand-spinning and hand-weaving."

The extension of sympathetic support to such an attitude is entirely inconsistent with Socialism as understood by Marxists; and the most energetic opposition to imperialist aggression is not incompatible with a recognition that the recrudescence of the Hindu caste system and the boycott of Western science is a step backwards. Marxism is founded upon Western science. The Marxist, while recognising that Eastern nations may develop the same capacity for social organisation as the West, cannot for the sake of vexing the common enemy afford to encourage recalcitrant nationalism in hostility to Western science and industrialism, as well as in an economic isolation calculated to become a danger to the future Communist Republic of Britain in view of our inability to satisfy our food requirements.

Fraternally yours, P. L. E. B.

"THE GREAT CONTRADICTION."

DEAR COMRADE,—Without detracting in any way from the value of Ablett's admirable reply to Dr. Scott, in two recent issues of the PLEBS, I should like, as briefly and as simply as possible, to suggest an alternative explanation of the supposed "Great Contradiction" in the Marxian Labour Value Theory. The contradiction is supposed to be that in Vol. I of *Capital* Marx asserts Value to be determined by Labour; but that in Vol. III he admits that an equal rate of profit has to prevail in a market, irrespective of the different proportions of machines and labour power employed in different factories at different stages of technical development. Ablett has shown that Price is not always equal to Value, but merely *tends* to be so; and that therefore there is no contradiction in the fact that commodities are often not *actually* sold at their value; those produced in a high stage factory (*i.e.*, with

less labour and more machinery) selling above, and those produced in a low stage factory (*i.e.*, with more labour and less machinery) selling below their real value, as measured by the amount of labour expended in their production.

Now, I hope it will not be thought a very grievous heresy if I make so bold as to maintain that *although* an equal rate of profit prevails, yet commodities *are* sold at their values. At any rate, the "heresy" may be of use in evoking discussion on the question.

It is clear that if a man produces fifty commodities in an hour, and another only thirty, they cannot both create the same value. That is why Marx showed that it was *average* human labour which created value—*i.e.*, labour of average intensity and skill of society at a given time. Individual labour above or below this average is reduced to terms of that social average so far as its value-creating properties are concerned. Thus if the engineer's labour is, say, twice as productive as is the average of all the labour of society, then one hour of the engineer's labour will be equivalent to two hours of average human labour. The relation between average labour and value is always constant, but the more productive individual labour is, *as compared with* this social average, the more value it creates. In more technical language, productivity and value vary in inverse ratio. (See Aveling's *Student's Marx*.)

Now, a capitalist only introduces new machinery in order to "save" labour; in other words, in order that in his factory the same amount of commodities may be produced by a smaller quantity of labour-power. In a high stage factory, where for every £100 spent more is spent on machines and less on labour-power than is on an average the case, the labour-power employed will be more productive than the average by virtue of the fact of its co-operation with better machinery. Hence a smaller quantity of labour-power in a high stage factory will produce the same amount of value, and of surplus-value, as a larger quantity of labour-power, which is less productive because organised in a low stage factory. The greater productivity per unit in the high stage factory will make up for the diminished number of units of labour-power employed.

The reverse is true of a low stage factory. For this reason the surplus-value created tends to level itself out into an equal rate of profit. Granted that this explanation is valid, it is *because* of the Marxian Law of Value that an average rate of profit prevails, and not because the Marxian law is prevented from acting fully owing to the requirements of free competition. The fact of the average rate of exploitation and the average rate of profit is merely the result of the fact that it is average human labour by which Value is determined.

May I submit this explanation to the attention of Marxists as possibly a somewhat more simple and satisfactory solution of the "Great Contradiction" than those which, as far as I am aware, have been propounded hitherto.

Yours fraternally, MAURICE H. DOBB

GET MOVING!

DEAR COMRADE,—The idea of "Strikes and Emergency Educational Facilities" is a good one. Much valuable time is lost during a strike which could be utilised in furthering the need of Independent Working-Class Education. Men although not having sufficient interest in the management of the dispute on hand, would attend the classes for the want of having something better to do, thereby getting their dormant brains awakened. The question of teachers surely need not be a hard one to settle. Many men who have had a large experience in the educational movement would be only too pleased to pass their knowledge on.

But why wait for strikes before starting classes? Much time is lost in peace time. You now have a little knowledge, get moving! and start classes in every area where none exist.

Yours fraternally, R. J. COLLINS

THE "PLEBS" ON WELLS

DEAR COMRADE,—According to the Press, Mr. Wells, on his return from Russia, immediately visited the Foreign Office. Was this to report to his masters? I am afraid Wells is lost to us. He might have made a grand proletarian, but the fleshpots of the bourgeoisie seem to have proved too attractive. Lenin's question put the acid test—"But why are you not fighting the class war?"

I want now to ask an unpleasant question. Is it the policy of the PLEBS to flatter a famous writer because he happens to mention the PLEBS in his latest pot-boiler? I feel sure other Plebeians must have felt uneasy at the two articles on

Wells. Maybe the writers think "Mr." Wells worth salvaging. I do not.

I think Bertrand Russell's book on Russia far better worth study and criticism than Wells'. He is a foe man worthy of our steel.

Yours fraternally,

J. J. CROWTHER

"OFFICIAL" ECONOMICS CLASSES

DEAR COMRADE,—May I draw the attention of Plebs in the London area to the activities of the L.C.C. in running evening classes in Economics; and suggest, further, that by attending these classes and, during questions and discussion, putting the real working-class view-point (in opposition to the orthodox stuff handed out) they can do good recruiting work for our own classes.

The L.C.C. gets an audience together. It is up to Plebs to go and tell them where they can study *working-class* economics. I know it can be done, because I have done it, with good results, in my own district.

Yours fraternally,

London, E.16.

W. J. STURROCK

ONE UP TO N. B.

DEAR COMRADE,—Your Esperanto contributor observes with regret that there is apparently no Socialist Teachers' Union in this country. He has overlooked what the Englishman scornfully refers to on his letters as N. B.! Here in this land of heather and unemployment, we have the Socialist Teachers' Society, Secretary, Miss J. M'Kechnie, 1317 (note the Scotchman's arithmetical powers!) Argyle Street, Glasgow.

Fraternally yours,

J. P. M. MILLAR

NEWS OF THE MOVEMENT

[*Pressure of space again compels us to hold over the Branch Directory*]

TWO COMPETITIONS

1 We want more postal subscribers. During the summer months (when the classes are suspended) the PLEBS circulation tends to droop, for no other reason than that class-students get out of touch with literature-secretaries. We appeal to Plebs everywhere to help us overcome this difficulty. And by way of encouragement, we offer a prize of

£5 WORTH OF BOOKS

(to be chosen by the winner, and supplied by the Plebs Book Dept.) to the class-secretary, organiser, or League member who sends us, before April 15 next, the greatest number of new postal subscriptions to the PLEBS. Subscriptions may be for six months (3s. 6d.) or twelve months (7s. 6d.). Cash, of course, must accompany the list of names and addresses of the new subscribers. You needn't wait until April to send your "captures" along. Begin now, and we'll keep a record of all those sent by you. Mark your list "Competition." Starting date, February 1.

2 You've noticed the "motto" on our front cover each month? We offer a prize of

10s. WORTH OF BOOKS MONTHLY

(to be chosen by the winner, and supplied through the Plebs Book Dept.) for the best motto, of not more than twenty-four words, suitable for use on the PLEBS cover, received before the 16th of each month. The motto may be either a quotation, an original aphorism, or a combination of both. But it should be pithy and pointed, and appropriate to Plebs propaganda. Send in your suggestions (clearly written) on a postcard, marked "Motto," and mention your name and address. You can send in as many entries as you please—on separate postcards. We reserve the right to hold over any "motto" for use later, but all those used will be awarded a prize as above.

* * *

Our new pamphlet is now ready—see advertisement and price list on back page of cover. Every Plebs Branch should get busy with it—it has been expressly designed for propaganda use.

And the class-secretary who doesn't see to it that every one of his students takes at least one copy ought to be superseded immediately. The North-Eastern District (Northumberland and Durham) and the London I.W.C.E. Council have each ordered special local editions for their own use. Order quickly, because there's not much elbow-room in the Plebs office while these pamphlets wait to be despatched.

The Labour College has recently been presented with a bust of the late Mr. Dennis Hird, and it has been placed in one of the lecture rooms. The Governors of the College at their January meeting recorded their appreciation and warmest thanks to Mrs. Hird and family for this splendid memorial of the late Principal.

The NORTH-EASTERN Area is holding an Educational Conference on Saturday, Feb. 5, in the

MINERS' HALL, REA HILL,
DURHAM.

Speakers, Principal W. W. Craik and T. A. Jackson (district organiser). Chair to be taken at 2.30 p.m. by that indefatigable enthusiast, Will Lawther. All friends—and foes—cordially invited.

Geo. Mearns, 130 Lees Road, OLDHAM, reports a good Economics Class going strong. Twenty students enrolled. A successful conference was held on December 21, and all T.U. branches are being "dunned" to support the class.

The LONDON area is in process of re-organisation. A committee has been formed, and it is

hoped to get out a scheme of linking classes in the various districts with the Plebs groups with a view to pushing the Magazine. More of this later. G. L. Deacon, 46 Farnham Road, Seven Kings, is willing to form a group in his district; local comrades please note.

BIRMINGHAM Plebs Class meets A.S.E. Club, 16A Spicel Street, Mondays (particulars from Secretary, A. W. Morris, 58 Colville Road, Sparkbrook). Lectures began January 10, on Economics, Industrial History, and Art of Public Speaking.

LIVERSEGE (as you'd guess from its name, it's in Yorkshire!) has Com. Highley of Halifax as tutor. A course in Elementary Economics is being followed by lectures on "Trade Unionism and Labour Organisation," and the Secretary, F. Martin, 12 Edward Street, Knowler Hill, will be glad to book new students.

LEEDS (not to be outdone by Bradford) now has a flourishing class which began with ten students and has now twenty-seven. The class meets Friday at the Shop Assistants' Union Rooms; full particulars from Steve Richardson, 1 Spring Road, Headingley, who, with Will Cowell, has been active in getting the class on its feet. Leeds has no Plebs group at present, but it soon will have. Watch it!

Are you coming to the Plebs Meet (Bradford, February 12-13)? Roll up, and let's have a record conference.

W. H.

TRA LA MONDO

Esperanto Notes by POPOLANO

WHATEVER opinion Plebeians may have about the League of Governments—beg pardon, Nations—they should at least be willing to learn from the experience of the Assembly in regard to the language difficulty; for the same problem confronts every international gathering, whatever its character. The *Daily News* correspondent, Mr. Wilson Harris, writing from Geneva, says:—

"In the full sense, indeed, no speaker worth listening to can be interpreted. All that can be done is to convey to an audience some approximation to the general content of a speech in a language half of them have failed to understand. Mr. Balfour emphasised that in an address he gave here last week. The language difficulty, he pointed out, was a far more serious handicap to a body like the League of Nations than was commonly recognised. A speaker was prevented from ever getting into full rapport with half his audience. While he spoke in one tongue the delegates familiar with another sat restless and

impatient, and when the translator was doing his part the other half were animated by the same emotions."

Just so! The point has always been a stock argument of the Esperantist. A few more centuries of the present bungling methods of attempting to conduct an international gathering without a common language, and it may become quite a commonplace!

The *Daily News* correspondent went on to point out how rare is the perfect interpreter, but claimed to have found one in the person of Dr. Edmond Privat. To Esperantists Edmond Privat is well known. At the Boulogne Congress in 1905, as a youth of 15, he addressed the Congress in Esperanto, making a marked impression by his mastery of public speaking. He then urged that Esperanto should be taught in the schools; it was useless getting elderly people to learn it—they would soon all be dead!

C'e la plenag'a generacio ne multo estas jam farebla. Eŝtu do sag'a kaj komencu c'e la junuloj! (Goethe.)

Garda vin!

En Portugalio fondig'is grupo de policanoj. Ili oficiale povas surmeti sur la maniko de sia veste verdan ŝtelon. (El *Esperanto*, G'enevo.)

* * *

Iu birdeto fluŝtris al ni en la orelon, ke lia satana mos'to la diablo komencas lerni Esperanton!

Germanio.

La ministro de popola edukado en Braunschweig dissendis cirkuleron la 20-an de Oktobro, 1920, ordonante enketon pri la ebleco instrui Esperanton en la lernejoj, kaj promesante s'tatan monhelpon al kursoj komencotaj.

Ankau en Hessen la ministro de edukado eldonis cirkuleron por instigi al la ŝtorigo de fakultativaj kursoj en la lernejoj de Hessen.

REVIEWS

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PRODUCTION

Lectures on Industrial Psychology. By BERNARD MUSCIO. (Routledge, 6s. 6d. net.)

ONE of the great practical achievements which the Independent Working-Class Education Movement has to its credit is that it is equipping a number of working men and women with a scientific outlook on life which enables them to enter into the garden—or wilderness—of "impartial" bourgeois culture, and pluck the fruits likely to be useful to the workers in creating a new social order, while avoiding the poison berries and opiate weeds which are so temptingly proffered. Some such useful fruits may be found in this little book.

The lectures were originally delivered in Sydney, under W.E.A. auspices, and the community of interest between capital and labour is, of course, taken for granted in theory. But the facts revealed in the book are in direct contradiction to this pleasant phantasy.

Among the tools that capitalism is developing for the future use of a communist society is "industrial psychology" (including what the Americans call "scientific management") or the science of human efficiency in production.

Industrial Psychology aims at using our knowledge of the working of the human mechanism so as to secure the maximum of production for a given expenditure of labour-power. It could equally well be used, in a community where production was for use, and not for profit, for the production of a desired output with the minimum expenditure of labour power. It proceeds by various methods, by adapting the machine to the man, so arranging its parts as to make the least possible demand on his physical strength, attention, judgement, etc.; by selecting workers for particular jobs on the basis of natural fitness and by regulating methods of work in accordance with ascertained physiological laws.

The first is largely an engineering question. The second involves applying the psychology of individual differences to the choice of a man or woman for a particular job. Among these differences, which are largely inborn, may be mentioned the rapidity with which one can see and take in a situation, precision of movement, muscular strength, hearing, liability to get "bored," capacity for concentrated attention, ability to pay attention to all the features of a complex situation, imagination, etc. The usual method adopted is to ascertain by careful

observation the qualities that fit a worker for a particular job, and then to devise laboratory tests for these qualities. When these tests are applied to workers of known capacity in their jobs, a high degree of correspondence is found between efficiency in the tests and efficiency in the actual service. Muscio gives interesting examples of such tests and their results.

Under the third heading we have such devices as the introduction of regularly arranged pauses in the work, to allow of the physiological process of recuperation. Results were obtained in heavy muscular work (shifting pig iron, shovelling, etc.) where the number of tons handled per man per day was increased nearly fourfold, without additional fatigue. The scientific study of the movements of different workers at a given job also leads to methods being devised for all, involving the minimum of effort.

Now, under capitalism, however well-meaning the capitalist, or the psychologist whom he employs, all these methods are no more than instruments for the annexation of a greater amount of surplus labour from the workers. The output per man may be trebled or quadrupled in a given time, but the individual worker only gets a modest increase of wage, perhaps 30 % to 60 %, and as the employer can do with much less labour (in one case cited 150 men could, with improved methods, shovel as much as was previously shifted by 500) the total earnings of the working class are actually less. The Marxian law holds; capital gets more, labour less. Peter is robbed to pay Paul, but the robber sticks to most of Peter's goods, and gives but a small additional wage to Paul.

Labour recognises this. It objects to the application of psychological methods to industry, because the effect is that the surplus production mostly goes to enrich the capitalist, more unemployment is produced, collective bargaining is rendered more difficult, class solidarity is weakened, and autocratic methods are encouraged. Muscio recognises that in a "Socialist state" it would be quite different, that industrial psychology could be made to "shorten the working day to one-third of its previous length."

The discussion in the last chapter, and the attempts to meet the widespread objections of labour to industrial psychology, make one regret that scholars like Muscio, who really have a message of value to the workers, do not include in their academic training a short course in Marxian economics. As a result of this deficiency, while

To us the value of any adult educational method lies in this—How far will it help us to mental and economic freedom?

PUBLIC SPEAKING COURSE

AN APPRECIATION

Substance of an article that appeared on November 20, 1920, in "Ways and Means," a 6d. weekly devoted to Business and Finance.

THE SOCIALIST MACHINE

THERE is probably no more efficient political machinery than that which exists to-day for the purpose of the propagation of Socialism. Society has only just begun to feel the force of revolutionary propaganda. There are several colleges and educational establishments at work. But the efforts of the Central Labour College and its imitators are altogether insufficient to explain the rapid growth of a class of young man which seems able on every occasion and in every locality to jump up on the slightest excuse and deliver himself of an arresting address in the interests of the revolution. The members of the Industrial League and Council, the National Alliance of Employers and Employed and similar bodies, who are accustomed to attend meetings of an industrial character, will not require to be reminded of the skill and force and power of the enthusiastic modern youth, who will never miss a chance of declaiming upon the ownership and control of the means of production, etc. The quality of the speeches is almost always good, the method of delivery is impressive, the marshalling of the facts and the construction of the phrases all point to careful training and preparation.

There is, of course, no secret about the methods by which all this is accomplished. They are not known because the public as a whole refuses to take an interest in them, not because the agitators as they are called work underground or hide the steps which they take to help along the cause they have at heart. We recently purchased from the HERALD League a Student's Home Study Course for public speaking. This very wonderful series of pamphlets consists of 12 simple lessons, and is sold to ambitious youths at the price of 3s. 6d. for 12 four-page octavo pamphlets. This study course is built up upon lines familiar to those who have used correspondence colleges, and is a model of its kind. Its author, Mr. George Belt, is to be congratulated on having compressed within a small compass nearly all there is to say about public speaking, while, at the same time, being careful to inculcate the spirit of unrest and revolution. He puts his students through careful breathing exercises, physical culture studies, mouth motions, tongue movements, and tells them what to do with the teeth, the lips, the hands, and even how to sit upon a platform. He gives them a mnemonic alphabet, whereby they are able to arrange their points in order and carry them in the memory for effective use in speaking. He sets them exercises in Shakespeare, teaches them pronunciation, and generally fits them for the work they are designed to carry on. We understand that some thousands of these courses have been sold, and we recognise some of the instructions given in many of the speeches to which we have listened from junior members of the extreme Labour Party. Opinion may differ as to Labour fitness to govern, but there can be no question as to its ability to organise propaganda.

WILLETT BALL (Editor *Railway Review*):—"For years we had been looking for something of this sort. Others charge many pounds sterling for the same scope of study. We have sold *one thousand sets of the 'Course'* to our readers, and hope to get very many more into the hands of our railway men."

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recognising that "all labour's important objections to industrial psychology were really directed against the method by which it had been put in practice," he fails to see that that *method* is inherent in the capitalist system, which must, by its very nature, turn into a new and efficient instrument for the exploitation of labour, a gift of science to humanity which, under Communism, would add immensely to human efficiency, freedom, and well-being. Only when industrial psychology and scientific management are controlled by the workers for the workers can they be acceptable to the workers.

The immediate question which society has to face is not so much the question of the psychology of efficient production as the psychology of the *will to produce*. This will to produce is as much determined by the subconscious complexes of the members of the working class as is any other feature of their daily life. Eden and Cedar Paul, in *Creative Revolution*, pp. 39-40, speaking of the causes which will go to make the revolution, refer to "the workers' refusal to continue running the capitalist machine as a profit-making enterprise 'owned' by the members of a dominant class." The mass of the workers have no incentive to produce more, while the more educated among them have become aware of positive reasons why they should not produce more. So, loudly as the capitalist class may howl for more production, backing their appeals with posters displaying the portraits of "sane and statesmanlike" labour leaders who have joined in the cry, it seems unlikely, on psychological grounds, that they will get much of it so long as their system lasts.

The book under review gives, to the man who can read between the lines, some idea of what would be the incentive to more production under Communism. We would not have the personal incentive to get rich at the expense of others, which bourgeois philosophers tell us is the only motive most men will work for. But there would be a still greater one, in that the more of the necessities of life we produced in a given time, the shorter would be the necessary working hours for all, or the more of the product would be available for the enjoyment of all. And under these conditions not only would the intelligent section, who were capable of realising this, work harder, but they would make those who were too dull or too vicious to see things in the same light work harder too. There will be no "ca' canny" then! And the workers themselves will see to it that the best advice of Industrial Psychologists is available, to secure that they attain their ends with the minimum expenditure of labour power.

NORDICUS

A VALUABLE LITTLE BOOK

Trade Unions in Soviet Russia.—A Collection of Russian Trade Union Documents compiled by the I.L.P. Information Committee and the International Section, Labour Research Department. (1s. 6d.)

A very valuable little collection, enabling us to get an insight into the gigantic constructive effort being made in Russia.

The greater part of the book is taken up by an article by Lozovsky (E.C. member of the All-Russia Central Council of Trade Unions), giving in condensed but readable form a short history of Russian Trade Unionism, together with a brief exposition of the problems which it has had to face since the memorable October Revolution, how it has tackled them, and how it proposes to tackle the new problems now arising. Sabotage, Workers' Control, Industrial Unionism, Factory Committees, Relation to Soviets, Wages, International Policy, Education—these are some of the problems dealt with. Lozovsky shows the line of action which has been taken up on these matters, and British Trade Unionists would do well to digest and assimilate the valuable material to hand in this short—too short—survey.

I give two quotations as being of special importance to the British T.U. movement:—

"The trade unions are the fundamental basis of the proletarian state, the sole organisers of labour in the process of production and the chief tool in economic construction."

"The fundamental principle of the Russian Trade Union Movement is: in one factory, one union; and this means that all workers, from unskilled labourers to hired engineers working in a metal factory, including also the wood workers, are members of the metal workers' union."

A speech by Lenin to the All-Russia Trade Union Congress of 1920 is another precious item in the book. The great and all-important trouble of the hour—the peasant question—is here dealt with in a masterly, typically "Leninian" fashion.

Our thanks are due to the compilers of this collection for the real service they have performed in presenting first-hand knowledge of this kind to British workers—and at a moderate price. Get it—not next week, but now! J. B.

FOR INDUSTRIAL HISTORY STUDENTS

An Introduction to English Rural History, by GEO. GUEST (W.E.A., 6d.), is a well-produced little pamphlet of 68 pp. In its last two sections it devotes attention to the organisations of agricultural labourers. Hammonds' *Village Labourer* has helped the author to realise the gross injustice inflicted upon the mass of the labourers by the Enclosures. We hope all supporters of the "Non-Party-Political" organisation which publishes the book will agree and help to remove the stain. While devoting a section to the pioneers, from 17th to the 19th centuries, of new methods in agriculture and cattle-breeding, the writer only in rare references deals with the modern use of machinery in this industry. And this while Ford alone turns out 400 tractors every day.

A booklet—*Agriculture* (25 cents), compiled by Bureau of Industrial Research, 1001 West Madison Street, Chicago—is exceedingly useful in this respect. One notable feature is the way in which nearly sixty illustrations and photographs are used to drive home the lessons of the text. The forked branch pitchfork, the first crude sickle and the primitive plough are placed alongside the harvester-thresher, which will cut,

thresh, clean and bag a nine-foot swath of grain in one operation, and the modern tractor plough, easily covering 50 acres a day. The man with the flail stands beside the modern threshing rig. In one photo the sower is "broadcasting" by hand, when 10 acres is a good day's work; on the other page is shown the modern seed drill which will sow 50 acres in the same time. American conditions in agriculture are not ours, but this pamphlet might be taken as a model by those who do not make the false distinction between "education" and "propaganda," and who are busy helping John Hodge to win out.

Another book whose binding, good paper, and excellent photographs make one envious is *A Brief Outline of Social and Industrial History*, by Edward Cressy (Macmillan). This is the author's *Outline of Industrial History* (reviewed by W.W.C. in PLEBS, April, 1916), more shortly and simply expressed in order to serve as a basis for "citizenship" teaching in the new Education Act classes. The author sees in such educational activity the only way in which well-informed men and women, recognising the "fearful complexity" of modern society, can very slowly make history. Apart from this lamentable timidity, and the misdating of the first Poor Law and the Minimum Wage Act, there is little to be said about this readable summary. To classes unable to make a trip through a modern factory the illustrations can be commended as the next best thing.

M. S.

DARK ROSALEEN

An Economic History of Ireland. By D. A. CHART. (5s. net.) *The Evolution of Sinn Fein*. By R. M. HENRY. (6s. net.) (Talbot Press, Dublin: Fisher Unwin, London.)

Plebeians desiring an aid to the understanding of the literally burning question of Ireland can hardly do better than supplement the writings of James Connolly with these two volumes. In *An Economic History of Ireland* we get not only a clear and eminently readable summary, but a considerable degree of detachment from orthodox illusions and prejudices, all the more remarkable because of the studied "moderation" of his language and the orthodoxy of his Nationalism. It is one more of those books which shame us by compelling the question—What have we done for our cause fit to put alongside this? The book has 210 pages, good plain type, stout paper, an excellent index, and is dirt cheap at 5s. net.

It serves as an excellent introduction to *The Evolution of Sinn Fein*, by R. M. Henry, and the personal quality of the writer is here even more striking. With no pretence to "impartiality" or pose of "striking a balance" the author, full of his subject, gives an objective exposition of the coming of Sinn Fein, which rises superior to normal "partialities" by reason of its arresting interest and by virtue of the skilful use of quotations. That the *Sinn Fein* for which Ireland now agonises is not Sinn Fein (but "another fellow of the same name"), that the new "complex" includes a Democratic Republicanism, a Literary-Traditional Communism, and a Proletarian class-consciousness—and that an alliance of the two latter in the persons of Patrick Pearse

and James Connolly made possible and inevitable the Easter Week Rising, which, in its turn, proved to be a resurrection of the neo-Fenianism of the Rebel Irish Republic—all these things are made abundantly clear in 284 pages of fascinating narrative. The evolution is traced no farther than the General Election of 1918, but in the light of this elucidation subsequent happenings are easily understood. In a later number of PLEBS we hope to return to R. M. Henry and his book.

T. A. J.

FEED MY SHEEP

Government and People. By CONRAD GILL, M.A., Reader in Constitutional History, University of Birmingham, and C. W. Valentine, Professor of Education in the same University. (Methuen, 7s. 6d. net.)

This book is obviously designed for W.E.A. classes. It is quite "safe"; its authors are real University men; it is bland and placid and full of a peace which passeth understanding.

As the Preface puts it, "The mere stimulation of interest in public affairs may even be dangerous unless it is under proper guidance." So the authors offer eminently proper guidance—so proper that even Mrs. Grundy might find it somewhat unexciting—on various current questions. The quality of their comments may be gauged by the following extracts:—

Under the heading "Uses of the Party System":—

It is often said that the Liberal mind is in favour of progress and the Conservative mind opposed to progress.* But that is not true. Both parties believe in reform, both believe in liberty. . . . It is also true that the parties represent different interests. . . . At the present time, though there are many exceptions to this rule, chapel-goers tend to be Liberals and church-goers to be Conservatives.

From a "Note on Bolshevism":—

There is already too much mixture of private and trading interests in government. Rule by Soviets would almost certainly aggravate this evil.

The book gives a pleasing impression of "studiousness," for it touches on pretty nearly every topical question, it gives very full bibliographies, and has a good index. But it never gets below the surface, nor does its "guidance" ever go beyond the provision of safe and easy platitudes about the admirable social system we live under—about "citizenship," "community life," and so forth. It ripples along in a puffing stream of facts and comments calculated to induce a state of amiable lethargy in the student, and never once does it give any evidence of a critical attitude or a fresh point of view.

In the chapter on "Government and Society" there is a little parable which is worth quoting:—

We may sum up our argument by likening rulers and people to a shepherd and his flock.

To the mind of Tudor and Stuart statesmen the shepherd was the king and his dog the executive part of the government. . . . A

* It is taken for granted that Liberals and Conservatives have minds.

hundred years ago Parliament had become the shepherd and the executive was still the dog. . . . Present-day opinion regards sheep, shepherd and dog as having very nearly (!) the same level of intelligence, and as engaging in an agreeable co-operation in the search for new

pastures. But it is the sheep themselves who do most of the discovery, while the special task of the shepherd and his dog is to keep order, to take care of the lambs, and to help the sheep that have grown old or infirm. W. H. Strehl!

THE PLEBS BOOKSHELF

IN the *Sunday Times* of January 2, Mr. Harold Cox—that tireless watchdog of the Bosses—reviewed Mellor's *Direct Action*, and uttered several warning growls over Mellor's suggestion that certain tutors of W.E.A. classes did not always impart that "safe" and "unbiased" teaching on social subjects which the W.E.A., as an organisation, stands for. A week later Mr. Albert Mansbridge wrote to express his horror at the idea of "prostituting the educational machinery of the W.E.A. for political and revolutionary ends." So if any of our readers are still doubtful as to why the PLEBS maintains an unrelenting opposition to the W.E.A. and all its works, they should study this phrase of Mr. Mansbridge's. And if they want a considered estimate of the relative value to the workers of the W.E.A. and the Labour-College-Plebs movement—an estimate which, although (as we think) unduly kind to the W.E.A., yet gives as its final verdict, "The future is with the C.L.C."—they should get Mellor's book (post paid 4s. 10d. from the Plebs Book Dept.) and read his chapter on "Education and the Class Struggle." And the book, let us add, is very well worth reading quite apart from this particular chapter.

Our new pamphlet is out. We can't very well review it ourselves, though we confess to thinking it good stuff. Its aim is to make clear the need for independent working-class education; to explain "what we study—and why"; and to describe the work and objects of the Plebs League. It is not "high-brow." It is aimed not at the theorist, but at the Man in the Workshop (though we would suggest that the theorist won't be any worse for digesting it). It covers the field more briefly yet more adequately, we think, than our last pamphlet—*What Does Education Mean to the Workers?* We sold 20,000 of that pamphlet in less than six months. Our movement has grown since then. Can't we break that record?

Messrs. Geo. Philip and Son send us two new atlases, each of which we can recommend to students. *The Record Atlas* (10s. 6d.) contains 128 pp. of political maps, brought up to date and showing the changes in frontiers, etc., resulting from the various Peace Treaties; as well as a very full Index. The page size of this atlas is about 10" x 6½"—large enough for the maps to be on a reasonable scale, but not too big for a bookshelf. *The Handy Volume Atlas* (4s. 6d.) is a pocket volume, 6" x 4", containing over 70 maps, 80 pp. of statistical notes, and a complete Index. It, too, has been brought up to date and, though the maps are of course too small to show much local detail, it is decidedly a handy little book for reference.

I doubt whether ever before the PLEBS has had a Rent Book sent it for review, but the *Ideal and Legal Rent Book*, compiled by T. I. Mardy Jones, S.W.M.F. (and obtainable from him at 16 Llantwit Road, Treforest, Glam., 7d. post paid), should be a useful little work to a good many Plebeians. It contains a brief but well-arranged Guide to the Rents Act, 1920; thereby providing you with "something to go on" in case of any little argument with your landlord. Applied Economics, in fact.

Don't forget to buy your books from the Plebs Book Dept. And make a note of our special cheap edition of E. and C. Paul's *Creative Revolution* (2s. 6d., post paid 2s. 9d.), full details of which we shall announce next month; the number will be strictly limited, so order in good time.

POSTSCRIPT:—As we go to press a copy of Max Beer's *Life and Teaching of Karl Marx* (3s. 9d. post paid) comes to hand from the National Labour Press. The author's reputation made it certain that the book would be of considerable interest, and a hasty glance through its pages confirms that assumption. At any rate, we are no longer dependent on Spargo's work. Beer's book, moreover, seems to contain a certain amount of new material—including examples of some of Marx's poems! Plebeians can obtain it through the Plebs Book Dept. *But please remember that, in this case as in other book orders, CASH MUST ACCOMPANY ORDERS.* J. F. H.

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