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**MONTHLY**

**TWOPENCE**

NOW IN PREPARATION.

# EASY OUTLINES OF ECONOMICS

By NOAH ABLETT.

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CONTENTS:--

- CHAP. I.—ECONOMICS & EVOLUTION.  
.. II.—COMMODITIES & VALUE.  
.. III.—EVOLUTION IN ECONOMICS.  
.. IV.—THE THEORY OF MARGINAL UTILITY & THE MARXIAN  
THEORY OF VALUE.  
.. V.—VALUE, MONEY, PRICE.  
.. VI.—MONEY CURRENCY.  
.. VII.—PRICE.  
.. VIII.—CAPITAL, LABOUR-POWER, SURPLUS-VALUE.  
.. IX.—COMPETITION.  
.. X.—A CRITICISM OF J. R. MACDONALD'S "SOCIALISM AND  
SOCIETY."  
.. XI.—ECONOMIC RENT.  
.. XII.—THE "GREAT CONTRADICTION."

—:O:—

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# THE PLEBS MAGAZINE

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

Vol. X.

November, 1918.

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## An Outline Economics Course

The following syllabus was specially prepared for S. Wales, but its usefulness to general students and teachers is so apparent that we are pleased to print it, together with a short introduction that will also help. Letters to Noah Ablett should be addressed c/o Editor, Plebs Magazine.

### INTRODUCTION.

If there is one criticism I would level against our methods of teaching (I am equally guilty with the rest) it is that we strain for over-elaboration instead of striving for a greater simplicity. In this syllabus I have striven for the utmost simplicity I am capable of. It is *elementary* economics, and I would forbid any teacher teaching from *Capital* in an elementary course. It is too forbidding for a first attempt. I have tried to place every salient and important fact in my syllabus. Armed with these a student could then tackle *Capital* with some knowledge of the method and the object of the study. There are only thirteen lectures, and would only take three months' when an advanced course could be taken in the first session, and when the interest of the student is already awakened, which I think is a great advantage, as he has not to wait for a year to get some view of the object of his study. I have not placed headings to my lectures, through sheer lack of time. That can easily be got over. I have given the lectures in a summarised form (some work for a rusty student) deliberately and for this important reason. With the usual skeleton syllabus all sorts of varieties of teaching may creep in, as I have experienced, but with the summarised form the salient and vital points cannot fail to be made in the same way all over S. Wales. I regard this as of immense importance.

Marx's *Wage-Labour and Capital*, 2d.

*Value, Price and Profit*, 6d.

De Leon's *Money*, 2d.

Marcy's *Shop Talks on Economics* 6d.

All from S.L. Press.

P.S.—Except the lectures on *Money* all the other material can be taught from *Wage-Labour and Capital*. N.A.

**Lecture I.** The science of Economics is an analysis of the Capitalist Method of Production, and its relation to previous modes of production. The evolutionary basis of Nature, Industry, and, consequently, of Society.—Early or primitive man, in order to obtain food, had to bring his body into physical contact with the earth, as all other animals have to do. Man's superiority over all other animals is due to his invention of instruments of production to procure food, etc. A knowledge of the growth, and the laws of that growth, of the instruments of production is therefore of the utmost importance. In the future, as in the past, the growth of the instruments of production will cause further social developments. To understand these things is to understand Economics. The way to understand is to analyse the present industrial position, bearing in mind its evolution from the past. That is the work of Economics.

**Lecture II.** What are Wages?—Are they the share the workmen get out of production? No. They are merely the price of the workmen's subsistence. This subsistence does not mean a bare living, but a living that varies with the standard of living due to customs, climate, industrial organization, etc. It also includes provision for rearing a family of future workers. Under slavery the slave was bought as cattle are to-day bought. Under Feudalism a portion of the products of the serf was taken by his lord and enough left for subsistence. Under the wage system the worker receives a money payment which enables him to purchase the means of subsistence.

**Lecture III.**—The terms, Labour and Labour-power, are two phases of the same thing between which there is a profound difference. A piece of paper may be black on one side and white on the other. So with the difference between Labour and Labour-power. Labour-power is the energy contained in the body of, say, John Jones, which he sells to a coal owner. When he has used his energy the product coal appears. The coal, when placed on the market, contains labour, but it forgets that it is the labour of John Jones, or even that it is coal. It is there as a commodity exchangeable like all other commodities for definite pieces of money. It may be exchanged for Bibles or for brandy. It has now attained a social character, and will be sold on a different market from which John Jones sold his energy. Be it remembered that John Jones did not sell coal to the coal-owner. To fail to understand this distinction is fatal to an understanding of Economics.

**Lecture IV.** The basis of Economics is the theory of value.—What is value? That which causes commodities to be exchangeable in certain proportions. What is the "that." First note there are two values in commodities: a watch tells the time; you may write with a fountain-pen; coal burns, etc. These attributes are called use-values, which, however, have nothing to do with the principles of exchange. Thus the most useful of commodities, say salt, may have the lowest value in exchange. The second value—value in exchange, which economics is mainly concerned with, is, and can only be, caused by Labour. Not Labour in any definite concrete form, but Social labour; not labour seen by the eye, but reasoned of by the mind or Abstract Labour. The labour of a cobbler in a remote village working with primitive tools is labour, but the product is exchanged in the market with boots produced by the latest appliances of Leicester, and it is the Leicester or Social labour which determines the value of the commodity.

It will be seen that the words Value and Labour are two words that have the same meaning.

*To be completed next month).*

# An Outline Industrial History Course

(Continued from last month.)

**Lecture VI. The Colonial System and Capitalism.**—(i.) The Great Discoveries. *Gold*. English Seamen and the Spanish Main. Antwerp. Diffusion of gold and easier *Exchange of Commodities*. Reaction of sea-trading on Bristol and West of England Industry. (ii.) Settlement of North America. Plantation of West Indies. Plantation of Ireland. Linen and Wool Exports and Colonial Imports at Bristol; *e.g.*, Rise of families like the Harfords, Wilkins of Brecon, Anthony Bacon of Whitehaven and afterwards of Cyfartha. (iii.) *The East India Company*.

Starr, Chap. xi. and xii.; *The State*, pp. 160-164; *Labour in Irish History*, Vol. I., Chaps. i., ii., iii.; Vol. II., Chaps. i. and ii.; *Capital*, Vol. I., Chap. xxxi.; *History of Canadian Wealth*, Vol. I., Chaps. i. and iii.; *Plebs*, June 1918.

**Lecture VII. The Industrial Revolution.**—(i.) Money made in manufacture, trade and plantations invested in *development of estates, new methods of farming*; encouragement of *corn export* in competition with Dutch; new period of *enclosures*. *Decline of Yeoman Class* (*e.g.*, Crawshays, Guests, Peels, Peases—all of whom left yeoman ranks for industry between 1700 and 1750) *Protection for English Manufactures*. Effect on Colonies and Ireland. American War of Liberation and Impoverishment of Irish. (ii.) Development of *factory industry* in linen, woollen, and cotton. Stimulation of manufactures. *Great Inventions in Textiles*. Dispossessed agricultural workers, displaced spinners and Irish workers become *new industrial proletariat*. (iii.) Demand for iron for war and domestic purposes stimulates iron manufacture. Loss of timber drives ironmasters to Monmouth and Merthyr. Begin to use *Welsh Coal*. Demand for puddled iron. Rise of Crawshays and Guests. (iv.) Newcomen and other "fire-engines" used in copper and coal mines at Cornwall, Whitehaven, Neath, etc. Boulton and Watt engines for mines, furnaces, works and mills. Easier mining of coal at Swansea and in S.W. Monmouth.

**Lecture VIII. Growth of the Industrial Proletariat.**—(i.) *Exchange of Commodities and increased scale of production* resulted in *roads, canals, tramroads*, and then in *railways*. (ii.) Adoption of *machine production* resulted in creation of great class of factory operatives, *workmen without tools*. (iii.) *Use of machinery and steam engine creates new industries*:—millwrighting; gas-lighting, engine-making, machine construction, tool-making. *Engineering craftsmen and tradesmen*. (iv.) Increase in means and complexity of production required huge increase in engineering, iron, steel, coal and chemical industries. *Increase and progressive dilution of industrial working class*. (v.) Increase in production of commodities resulted in *increased clerical and distributive proletariat*. (vi.) Increase in proletarianisation of workers and growth of population in industrial centres resulted in *increase of food, furniture, and accessory workers*.

REFERENCES TO LAST TWO LECTURES.—Starr, Chap. xv.; Craik, pp. 13-19; *Capital*, Chaps. x., xv., xxv., pp. 664-735, and xxvii. Smiles (*Boulton and Watt*). Gibbins, *Industrial History*; *Condition of English Working Class in 1844*; *Politics of Capitalism*, Newbold.

**Lecture IX. The Politics of Capitalism, Part I.**—(i.) Tudor Monarchy arose on ruins of Feudal Polity. New landowners and Church being loyal to Crown; *e.g.*, Herberts and Somers. (ii.) Merchants and farmers rise as new political force. *Money v. Crown and Landed Party*. Landed and Merchant Parties supreme in 1660. (iii.) Sovereignty of the landed Parliament. *Abolition of Feudal Dues*. *Merchants and landowners gain the Constitution in 1689* and rule England until 1832; *e.g.*, Butes and Harfords, typical of

these classes. (iv.) *Shopkeepers, yeomen, farmers and manufacturers arose as Liberals and secured Parliamentary victory in 1832.* New manufacturer-merchant classes shared political powers, 1820-60; e.g., Guest, Crawshays, Peels, Gladstones, Palmerstons. (v.) *Tory party becomes Conservative Party and rallies all the rich.* (vi.) *Master craftsmen weavers, etc., become Radicals and Chartists; e.g., in South Wales, flannel makers were Chartists.* Later these elements emigrate or dissolved into shopkeeper and working classes. (vi.) *Working Class still relies on chapels, friendly societies, temperance societies, and forms craft and trade unions.* Politically, they are Radicals or Tories. *Thrift period.*

REFERENCES.—*Puritanism*, C. Meilly; *Politics of Capitalism*, Newbold; *Thrift*, Smiles; *Co-operative Movement*, Beatrice Potter; Craik, pp. 19-59; *The State*, Chaps. viii. and ix.; *Capital*, Chap. xxvii.; *Trade Unionism, Industrial Democracy*, Webb.

**Lecture X. Combination and Consolidation of Capitals.**—(i.) *Manufacture of Textiles.* Manufacture of Iron and other commodities at first specialised. Manufacturers purchased raw materials, fuel and other requisites, leased sites or even works, and then sold their commodities to the consumer via the independent brokers and merchants. (ii.) Manufacturers then invested as individuals in railways, gas and water companies; helped to finance machine factories, joined in forming banks with other capitalists, and invested their profits in iron and steel works, collieries, chemical works and other industrial undertakings. (iii.) *Landowners developed mineral properties, built canals and tramways, invested in railways, harbours, banks, etc.* (iv.) *Landowners, merchants and manufacturers all invested indiscriminately in foreign railways, foreign issues, land companies, etc.* (v.) *Technical improvements resulted in amalgamation of separate works into departmentalised establishments, manufactures began to acquire raw materials, fuel supplies, buying and selling agencies, and to establish by-product industries.* (vi.) *Combination of undertakings to get rid of competition; economies in management, development of managerial staffs. Growth of the "Salaried."*

REFERENCES.—*Politics of Capitalism*, Newbold; *Evolution of Modern Capitalism*, Hobson; *Marx and Modern Capitalism, Solidarity amongst the Shipowners*, Newbold.

**Lecture XII. The Politics of Capitalism, Part II.**—(i.) Evolution of Constitution, 1660, 1689, 1832. Industrial Capitalists gain Parliamentary control, 1832, 1846, 1868. Overthrow of landed class rule, 1846. The Merchants of Industrialism (e.g., Canning, Peel, Gladstone): Landed-Financial-Industrial class rule, 1878-1908. New Industrial-Financial Power, 1908-1914. (ii.) Landed class rule, 1793-1825. Attempt to hold down by force. Repeal of Combination Laws. Police instituted to replace Army. Reform of Criminal Law and Penal Code. Reduction of Taxation. Rise of Conservative Party. (iii.) Revolutionary Chartism undersapped by Free Trade. The Policy of Peel replaces that of Castlereagh. Financial Reform. Political Reform. Educational Reform. Health and Factory Reforms. Gladstone and Beaconsfield. (iv.) Rise of Industrial Capitalists as Financial, Social and Political force. Liberal Unionism. Liberal Labourism. Liberal Imperialism. Socialism, 1880-1900. (v.) Imperialist Reaction, 1885-1905. Liberal-Labour Revival, 1905-1910. Imperialist Capitalist Sweep 1909 onwards. (vi.) Reconstruction. Reconciliation. Middle-class Death Rattle. Revolutionary Industrialism.

REFERENCES.—*Politics of Capitalism; Modern Imperialism*, Hobson; *War of Steel and Gold*, Brailsford; *Liberal and Tory Hypocrisy*, Glyde; Revised edition (Mrs.) J. R. Green's *Short History of the English People; The State*, Chap. x.

**Lecture XIII. The Capitalist State.**—(i.) The Crown and the Executive. Shadow and substance. The Law and the Ruling Class. Judge-made v.

Statute Law. Check on People. (ii.) Parliament and Crown Offices. Propertied Class dictates to Crown. Parliament in 18th and 19th Centuries. (iii.) The Army of Occupation, for Police and Empire building. The Navy for Empire building. Piracy and Contracts. The Mystery of National Defence. (iv.) The passing of the Church. The Church Brigade. The Salvation Army. The Y.M.C.A., Boy Scouts, Girl Guides. (v.) The Police (Constabulary). Educational System. The Tied Press. The Pictures. The Censorship. (vi.) Public Health. Factory Mine and Shop Regulations. Welfare. Housing. (vii.) Colonial, Agricultural, Trade, Post, Labour Ministries. (viii.) The Rise of the Capitalist Servile State.

REFERENCES.—*The State*, Chaps. v. and viii. *How Europe armed for War; Conscription*, Hogben (in preparation).

**Lectures XIV, XV. Labour Movement.** (i.) Trade Unionism before 1825. 18th Century unions and their troubles. The Combination Laws. The Spy System and Castlereagh. Francis Place and the Repeal of these Laws. (ii.) Trade Union Revival of 1830-35. Rise of Chartism, 1838-48. Beginnings of Owenite Co-operative Societies. (iii.) Trade Unionism 1850-1874. Rise of A.S.E., Miners, Carpenters, Cotton Operatives, A.S.R.S., etc. Struggle for legalisation of collective methods. (iv.) Beginnings of Parliamentary activity, 1869, 1874, 1885. (v.) The Socialist Movement, 1881-1900. Rise of S.D.P., I.L.P., Labour Representative Committee. Labour Party, 1906. (vi.) Unionism among the Unskilled. Rebuff to the A.S.E., 1897. Rise of S.W.M.F. Strike Period, 1910-1914. Shop Stewards.

REFERENCES.—Crain, pp. 19-110. *Shop Steward Movement*, Murphy; *The Miners' Next Step*.

(I recognize the inadequacy of the later bibliographies, but I have endeavoured to avoid expensive books. I have hopes, however, of being able to extend the list of reference works in consultation with Fred Shaw, W. Paul, and others. The absence of a Marxian literature dealing with British conditions is much felt. There is little beyond Paul and Crain to which one can look.

J.T.W.N.

## Reviews

### J. T. MURPHY'S NEW PAMPHLET.

*Compromise or Independence? An Examination of the Whitley Report.* By J. T. MURPHY. (Sheffield Workers' Committee, 56 Rushdale Road, Meersbrook, Sheffield. 2d.)

As our readers will readily believe, the job of "riddling" the Whitley Report does not strain J. T. Murphy's abilities. As a matter of fact, one wishes he had extended himself rather more, for this pamphlet is a little disappointing; and the reason, I think, is that it appears to have been written in a contemptuous frame of mind—contempt for the Reconstruction potters who framed the Report, and some contempt, too, perhaps, for workers so blind to social facts as to need telling that schemes like the Joint Industrial Councils are nothing but "efforts to preserve the position of the capitalist class." In fact, the pamphlet strikes me as being to a considerable extent the product of a mood, and I hope sincerely, for the sake of the vital work he is doing, and is going to do, for the modern working-class movement, that J.T.M. is not afflicted by "moods." Having said which, I must add that there are, of course, many good points, tellingly put, within these dozen pages, none better than its conclusion, which insists on the necessity for effort in three directions. *Independent working-class education; Working class organizations independent of the organization of employers; and an independent objective for the working class.*

J.F.H.

## SONGS FOR WORKERS

*Satire and Sentiment.* By W. N. Ewer (*The Herald*, 1/6 net.

As I read this last slim volume of W. N. Ewer's verse, a sentence from an article by John Reed in the September *Liberator* (late *Masses* and *New Review*) kept running in my mind:—"Remember this (the I.W.W.) is the only American working-class movement that sings. Tremble then at the I.W.W., for a singing movement is not to be beaten." . . . What better songs than Ewer's poems could there be?

It is not merely because he is a Socialist—the Socialist movement bears bad poets with a persistency that is appalling!—but because the strength and honesty of his sentiment and the vigour of his satire are combined in *good verse* that makes Ewer's poems so notable. I hope he will hammer out a cutting sentence for every one of our huckster-politicians, so that they may be preserved from oblivion by such lines as:—

"I know nothing of Labour," says Freddy Guest.

Prince David, we are getting rather fed,  
We're losing faith in all your patent pills.

And this noble epitaph on the Middle Class:—

Still then be ours to rule and guide  
The lower classes, and to take  
Our toll of everything they make,  
To eat the food that they provide.  
So shall the workers pay the price,  
So shall we keep our honour pure  
And from the masses shall secure  
Equality of sacrifice.

The shameful part played by some of the middle-class in Russia is having its effect in a revolt against "intelligentsia" everywhere; but we must judge of individuals by their acts and their principles—we must remember that a university accent and manner do not always mean a bourgeois outlook any more than horny hands and a dirty face necessarily signify a working-class point of view. Ewer is building his reputation on solid rock in expressing the spirit of the workers.

There is "infinite variety" in this little volume. Surely, for sheer beauty, even Keats hardly surpassed "Nightfall," and certainly "The Fool in God" will bear comparison with anything R.L.S. ever wrote. These two poems for their beauty and wistfulness, and "Noblesse Oblige" for the contempt so gently but firmly expressed, are my favourites. I hope I may yet hear "Heigh ho! Balbus is a fool," and "God placed the Russian Peasant under the Great White Czar" sung at our meetings. For Ewer's poems do really inspire—do help one to go back to irksome tasks with a better will. Nor does the beauty of his lines drug the senses—the whip of his scorn keeps one too wide awake . . . The writer of these poems has lost his own class and gained the whole world!

W.H.

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## News of the Movement

We could fill this Magazine and another like it with reports of classes springing up all over the place, but we are compelled, because of our restricted space, to condense each report, and ask the comrades in that district to forgive us. After all, the work is being done, and that is what matters most, our movement is growing well where it has established itself, and it is springing to life in places where we should have thought such things impossible. Secretaries are once more requested to send small, concise reports.

\* \* \* \* \*

The LIVERPOOL Conference was such a success that another has been held on October 26th, Fred Shaw giving the address. J. Hamilton reports of the September Conference, 71 delegates present, representing 41 organizations—Liverpool Trades Council, Liverpool Labour Party, N.U.R. District Council, Women's Co-op. Guild, I.L.P. Fed., B.S.P., N.G.L., Fabian Soc., and branches of T.U.'s. Jack Murphy gave a rousing address, and the sale of literature was very good.

A splendid syllabus has been arranged and classes are held at Liverpool, Edge Hill, Kirkdale, Garston, Birkenhead, in Indust. Hist., Economics, Philosophy, Biology and Evolution. Write to J. Hamilton, 10 Mill Lane, Islington, Liverpool, for particulars. Our comrade, Alex Evans, of Wigan, is taking two classes, and sends glowing accounts of a veritable boom of classes (or demands for classes) in Lancashire.

Comrade E. Isley is also busy and Liverpool bids fair to be the centre of a big revival.

\* \* \* \* \*

WIGAN has formed a branch of the Plebs League, and is running a class in Economics, and although no other reports are to hand, there is great activity throughout Lancashire.

\* \* \* \* \*

YORKSHIRE is not far behind (!) for Sheffield, Leeds, York, Huddersfield, and Bradford all have their classes, or hope to have them. Sheffielders write W. Ellison, 149 Foxglove Road, for Lectures by Jack Murphy; Bradfordians, Miss A. Bancroft, 54 Ducksworth Terrace, or for "East" Bradford, W. Widdison, 130 Maidstone Street, Bradford Moor. Meredith Titherington, one of the "old gang," is the lecturer. York is still in the nucleus state. All Plebeians in the district are urged to write to E. W. Ward, 5 Charles Street, Clarence Street, for particulars. Fred Shaw writes that a fine Conference was held on September 22nd at Halifax, but this is all we have heard about it to date. Huddersfield is mobilising, and independent working-class education spreads like the 'flu over the North.

\* \* \* \* \*

MIDDLESBROUGH has had a Conference on September 29th, J. Allen in the Chair, C. T. Cramp, prospective Labour candidate, giving the address. Classes commenced October 6th. Sec., Geo. Wright, 3 Clarendon Road. An appeal was made at the Conference and resulted in a collection of £1 3s. being sent to help *the Plebs*. The same thing was done at Barrow-in-Furness, and a smaller amount sent along. Wigan comrades sent £4, and a Durham class, per Will Lawther, 15/-. We hope to give a list of donations next time if space permits. Our gratitude must not be judged by this meagre mention. The Plebs is safe for another month or two—thanks once more to the rallying of our rank and file.

\* \* \* \* \*

BARROW-IN-FURNESS has started a class, and it has also started Ablett's book on its career by forwarding, per T. W. Pickthall, seventy-five pound notes as a loan, free of interest, till next April. Instead of appeals this time,

we are full of thanks to our unknown and unnamed comrades. Work and worry are nothing when such encouragement comes along. We shall rely on other comrades to send cash with order for Ablett's book, so that we can repay this splendid loan as soon as possible.

DERBY was holding a Conference on October 19th. We are sorry that we g to press before the report of this meeting is in, but hope to give particulars next time. Noah Ablett, Will Lawther, C. T. Cramp and Ebby Edwards and Fred Shaw were billed to speak. An All-Star programme!

BIRMINGHAM class, by this time a hardy annual, is sending offers of a monthly guarantee of support for Plebs Organizing Fund, and two new classes are in process of formation at Smethwick and West Bromwich. B. J. Rowland, 120 Winson Street, Winson Green, will be glad to hear from those interested or willing to join.

READING N.U.R., Bulwell (Notts.) N.U.R. and Southport N.U.R. are all running classes on Plebs lines; taking Mark Starr as their beacon light.

LONDON last, but not by any means least. Classes are held at Water Lane Infants' Hall, Stratford, E., Sundays at 3.30. Fee for 22 lectures 2/6.

October 13th to December 15th—Economics, H. P. Clements. January 5th to February 9th, Industrial History, Marjory Newbold. February 16th to March 23rd, Biology, Lancelot Hogben. Write K. E. Read, 85 Central Park Road, East Ham, E. 6.

The classes at the C.L.C. still continue, with Comrade Terry teaching Thursdays at 8, Sundays at 11.

*For the benefit of Inquirers.*

If you wish to constitute a definite branch of the Plebs League all members must pay 1/- to Central Fund. "All expenses incurred by District or Branch organizations shall be met by an additional payment from members within that area." (See Methods on back of cover.)

If you are a class and wish to affiliate the fee is 2/6 per year. Branches constituted as such will naturally take part in the coming re-organization of the League, mere affiliation will not entitle a class to do this. Only actual Plebs League members will vote. All fees are payable September any year.

## Correspondence

### THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PLEBS.

SIR,—I disagreed and agreed with Walton Newbold's letter last month, and I should like to say how and why.

It seems to me that our need is not so much a democratic basis for the League, but any sort of a basis. The "control and direction of policy" and "the conduct of the Magazine" sound very awe-inspiring, but what do they mean? "Controlling" with much pomp, many meetings, and a lot of chin-wagging over something we have all agreed on seems rather futile. We have certain principles very definitely laid down, and these principles had to be carried out. The next thing was to get the work done, and the *Plebs* has always been fortunate in finding some one willing to do four persons' work, so that this difficulty was overcome. If this is "direction from the top," "instruction by leaders," "control by elders," anyone who likes can take my share of it to-morrow!

Perhaps I am not worthy to be called an elder, but I cannot for the life of me see how the hack work of keeping accounts, correcting proofs, answering letters, arranging the Magazine, can possibly "entrench" me as an official. Certainly I do feel a bit entrenched since I have been ordered complete rest by the doctor but cannot get out of my trench to have it!

The policy of the Magazine remains what it was, and always will be, and how can elders govern the League when the League consists of a few scattered individuals? Perhaps Newbold meant somebody else, but my eye (or is it my periscope?) scans the horizon in vain for any signs of "official element." True it is that dimly I perceive the E.C., of which Newbold is a member, but E.C. meetings have convinced me that the "rump" is very much in the rear where "officialism" is concerned.

I agree with the second half of his letter. We do need to re-organize the League, not because of any of the comic things alleged, but merely because the League is too scattered. This separation is not due to any desire on the part of any element, official or otherwise, but to the fact that our propaganda has spread and flourished. Once railway travelling becomes cheaper we can call a conference of delegates from branches and arrange our scheme of re-organization. It is a big job, I own, but right at the very beginning let us drop this talk about "an official element entrenching itself." It is too funny for words.

I want the districts and branches to have some means or knowing the problems and difficulties of the E.C.—and of the harassed secretary! Last month the "S.O.S." signal just saved us, but it was a near shave. The districts and branches and classes nearly had to subscribe for a wreath! We want unity because we need help from our branches, not because we (I speak as one of the officials) need controlling. As Vesta Tilley sings, "Everybody's got to be controlled"; but I think I am right in saying that no organization in the whole Socialist movement has less official element or direction from the top than the Plebs.

We do need (and here I agree wholly with Newbold)—(1) voting from the branches, and (2) district representatives constituting the E.C. But it is more a question of a gathering of friends agreeing on a joint policy for further and better work than of the rank and file "demanding control."

I do not agree that it would be necessary to meet every four months. Our work is to "deliver the goods," and we can get on with it without much talking about it. Our work is the classes, and they are booming. I may have a sordid mind, but my keenness for district organization is founded on a desire for more money to get on with the war! I don't care a tinker's curse about "making a living reality of democratic control," if only some of the rank and file and *all* the official element will band themselves together and help to SHIFT THE WORK!

I do not want to be told that this letter is undignified. Having no ambition to be an official or an elder my dignity does not concern me. I know that I have worked (and worried) as never before, and that I am only too keen to keep on working. We have unlimited opportunities in front of us. Let us make the most of these opportunities by linking our branches together in order to work more efficiently.

Life is too short to start fighting things that do not exist, and the "official element" in the Plebs is one of these things. We have better work to do and a better fight to wage. Let us make the re-organization of the Plebs its regeneration.

Yours in the cause,

WINIFRED HORRABIN.

DEAR COMRADE,—As a member of the Plebs League, I should like J.T.W.N. to be a little more explicit concerning the need for "reorganization of the Plebs Movement."

In what way, and how, has the "rump" excluded the rank and file from having any control, in the past? If "the movement must avoid *direction* from the top" and "*instruction* by leaders" then what is to be the function of the proposed new E.C.? If this is to be the "principle" to be followed in the future, what object will be served by the E.C. "knowing what are the problems and difficulties of the districts"? Further, if no "instruction" is to be given by "leaders" who is to give it? or how is it to be obtained?

What need is there for the "cry of warning" that we should "do all we can to prevent the entrenchment of an 'official element' in the League??" What attempts have been, or are being made in this direction? It seems to me that some people are unduly obsessed with the phrase "democratic control," and are endeavouring to make a fetish of it. Much as "democratic control" should be the *ultimate* object to be obtained, yet for the *immediate* present it is neither possible nor desirable. I am well aware that to some this view may appear to be rank heresy; nevertheless, it is the surest and quickest way to the desired end. And, by the way, it is strictly in harmony with the Marxian *dialectical* philosophy, the *application* of which, apparently, even some of those who frequently shout the name of Marx do not seem to understand.

Yours, etc.

"ONE OF THE RANK AND FILE."

## Plebs Publications—Potted

We have received in donations, since October 1st, exactly as much money as we had the whole of last year. We have met our September account and have very nearly met the October one too. We could do this now, IF ONLY PEOPLE WOULD PAY WHAT THEY OWE. Donations each month will be necessary; meanwhile, our very sincere thanks to all comrades who answered so promptly to our S.O.S. signal last month.

Cash with order now for Ablett's book, please. We shall print and despatch as soon as possible. But we shall have to ask for a little patience. We have orders for a great many, so send early.

People who write asking questions that cost threehalfpence to answer are respectfully asked to enclose a stamp for that amount.

Bound volume of *Plebs*, 1917, now ready. Five shillings, post paid.

Don't stop begging, because we can't stop asking. We are only pausing for breath.

A special appeal to Trade Unionists (leaflet) will be sent on request, for judicious "planting." Don't waste these, but get them distributed where they will bear good fruit.

More appeals (and, we hope, *thanks*) next month.

W.H.

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# THE SOCIALIST Monthly 2d.

## The Plebs Bookshelf

Miss Cicely Hamilton was writing recently in the *Daily News* about the "hospital mind"—the "mental lethargy" which hospital routine is apt to induce in patients. The kindness of certain friends (with nice libraries) has enabled me—at least, I hope so, and that the disease won't "come out" later—to avoid that awful complaint, and my spell "in dock" has meant for me a beautiful orgy of reading. One of my biggest treats has been the late Dixon Scott's *Men of Letters*, which contains the best critical appreciation of Shaw, as a man of letters, I've yet found; as well as an essay on Wm. Morris which, by its enthusiastic commendation of it, made me anxious to read Clutton Brock's little volume (Home University Library) on the man whom Wm. Paul referred to in these pages recently as "perhaps the greatest of English Socialists." That, too, I was able to borrow promptly, and I hasten to recommend it strongly as a book to be read, and possessed. Here is Mr. Brock's summary of Morris' approach to, and vision of, Socialism:—

The alternative of a splendid aristocracy and a dull democracy did not exist for him, for he himself was neither a splendid aristocrat nor a dull democrat. He was a craftsman, and the first of his kind to consider politics as a craftsman. He saw that in the modern world the craftsman is everywhere subordinate, indeed, that he was ceasing to exist; and that was the reason, he believed, why the ordinary man, robbed of his chance of creation, had become mediocre. Every man, he held, ought to be creative according to his natural powers; and, even for the ablest, to think without making meant unhappiness and intellectual error. His desire, therefore, was for a society in which the craftsman should be esteemed and powerful; in which the mass of men should wish to be craftsmen, and should look for happiness in the practice of some craft rather than in domination, or in pleasure pursued for its own sake.

(I hope no Industrial Unionist will read into the word "craftsman" here his own particular meaning.) Here again is Mr. Brock's reply to those who label Morris "mediaeval-minded":—

The very comparisons which he made between one age and another would never have been made by any mediaeval mind. He saw past and present *in the mass*, and he saw *individual things as symptoms of a general state of being*. This tendency of his mind is the modern scientific tendency, the power of which we may judge from the fact that it became a habit in one who was so little interested in science.

Students of Dietzgen will be interested in the remark that while "philosophers have talked about the arts for ages, but have isolated them from other activities, Ruskin and Morris looked rather for *their connection with other activities*, and with the whole mind of the society that produces them." Mr. Brock's side-glances at Morris' contemporaries are acute too—Ruskin, in whom "aesthetic discontent first became conscious and scientific. For he saw that the prevailing ugliness was not caused merely by the loss of one particular faculty," but was due to social conditions. (Interesting to realise that from one point of view Ruskin *was* scientific!). Carlyle—who disliked 19th century civilization "as much as Jonah disliked Nineveh," but who "had no notion of a civilization to take the place of that which he wished to destroy, nor of a peace of mind to succeed the complacent torpor against which he raged." And one must find room for that letter which R.L.S. wrote, but never sent, to Morris, protesting against his use of "whereas" for "where":—"For the love of God, my dear and honoured Morris, use *where*, and let us know *whereas* we are, wherefore our gratitude shall grow, whereby you shall be the more honoured wherever men use clear language, whereas now, although we honour, we are troubled."

I am afraid most of Walton Newbold's fulminations, in the *Call* and elsewhere, against the Middle-Class Socialist, and the *New Age's* equally fiery counter-attacks on my esteemed colleague, leave me a little cold. He, or she (the Middle-Class Socialist) scarcely seems worth all this eloquence. If he is a good sort, he takes his place in the movement—the working-class movement—ready to be of service wherever he can; conscious that, though his upbringing may have equipped him to do some things better than his proletarian friends, yet it may at any time trip him up and exhibit his unfortunate shortcomings. If, of course, he is merely a condescending Fabian—well, why worry? A fly more or less on the wheel will scarcely hinder the movement overmuch. I admit that those people whose past is too strong for them, who want special treatment, who *will* travel by the workmen's train, so to speak, but want a first-class compartment; who (to vary the metaphor) must have a commission before they join up, are decidedly annoying. But they're hardly worth the "heavy stuff" J.T.W.N. hurls at 'em. . . . He's made Orage *very* angry. His native wood-notes (of the week) get very wild; he brackets Newbold and Havelock Wilson together as "Labour advocates who would exclude brains, commonly called the intellectuals or the bourgeoisie (!), from their movement." Quite too modest, isn't it? And really, Mr. Orage, so worldly wise a journalist as yourself must know well that there are "brains" and "brains." My Lord Northcliffe might contract—he would like to!—to supply the Labour Movement with "brains"—of a sort. . . . What we want to exclude is by no means "brains" (of the right sort), but an all too frequent attendant attribute of braininess—*viz.*, bumptiousness.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Education is a great power. If you can canalize it you can use it hydraulically for public works." So writes Prof. Sadler, in an Introduction to *The German School as a War Nursery*, by V. H. Friedel (a French writer). Profoundly true. And just as true in England or France as in Germany.

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The gift of £20,000 towards the foundation of Italian Chairs at Oxford and Cambridge moves the *Times* (Oct. 3rd) to urge the desirability of "a League of Universities"—"a linking up of the humanistic forces of the various members" of a League of Nations. Consolidation, amalgamation, in short, in the sphere of education. Some day—may it be soon—the international Labour movement will perceive the same necessity.

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"Among the fascinating books that have never been written (and they are still the most fascinating)," declares Sir A. Quiller-Couch ("Q") in *Studies in Literature*, "I think my favourite is Prof. So-and-So's *History of Trade Routes from the Earliest Times*, a magnificent treatise, incomplete in 3 volumes." A magnificent treatise, indeed—a magnificent subject, at all events; and some of us, who itch to be turning its pages, hope that "Prof. So-and-So" will make a good job of it. What a chance for some Plebeian, or Labour Collegian, of the future! On the whole subject, indeed, of Geography and its relation to History great work remains to be done.

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"English translations of German prose are notoriously ponderous and opaque," remarked an *Observer* reviewer recently. As a sufferer (from some of Kerr's translations—and others) I wholeheartedly agree with him. "Opaque" is a particularly good word! "As clear as mud," to put it more colloquially. Why should it be so? Though the original German be as "ponderous and opaque" as—well, mud, the translation surely need not be so; unless strict literalness be the aim of the translator. I ought to add, by the way, that I have never had the opportunity of testing Eden and Cedar

Paul's translation of Trietschke's *magnum opus*. Their opinions on this particular question—"Why ponderous and opaque?"—would be interesting.

There are very evidently Prussians and Prussians! Mr. Geo. A. Schreiner, who has just written *The Iron Ration*, a study of the internal conditions of Germany in wartime, tells how a *Prussian colonel* said to him: "The peoples of Europe are at one another's throats because one set of capitalists is afraid that it is to lose a part of its dividends to another. The only way we have of getting even with them is to turn Socialist and put the curb on our masters." Such (h)uncharacteristic sentiments would doubtless anger Mr. Havelock Wilson as much as, or even more than, utterances of the more normal Prussian kind!

The Editor of *Industrial Peace*, in the course of a letter to us, congratulates the *Plebs* on "its avoidance of the dullness of some publications, and the cant of others." He thoroughly enjoyed (in the May No.) "the picture of, shall we say, Dudley Docker presenting a lemon to Noah Ablett." We are gratified. And some day we must persuade our artist to do a companion picture of, say, an Industrial Pacifist Horrified at the Fierceness of a Class Warrior.

We haven't discussed any novels just lately. So I make no apologies for strongly recommending Oliver Onion's trilogy—*In Accordance with the Evidence*, *The Debit Account*, and *The Story of Louie* (Nisbets' 1/6 Series). Space won't permit of any attempt to describe them. *Read them*.

. . . Tolstoyans—by which I mean readers, not "followers,"—will note that *Anna Karenina* is now obtainable (2 vols. 1/9 net each) in the World's Classics, the eminently satisfying series which already included *Twenty-Three Tales*, and *Resurrection*. . . . *Fabian News* (Sept.-Oct.) contained a brief memoir of F. W. Hayes, painter, novelist and dramatist, who died recently in his 71st year. His novels included a socialist romance, *The Story of the Phalanx* (1894), which is described as dealing with "the constructive side of of a Socialist State," and containing "an answer to almost every objection, economic or philosophical, that has ever been raised to the theory"—"a storehouse of valuable arguments." I note it here in order to ask whether any Pleb has ever come across the book, which I had never before heard of?

In a *Sheffield Telegraph* report of a W.E.A. lecture on "German Trade Unionism," by Mr. Rennie Smith, of the Manchester School of Economics, I read that—"Much amusement was caused by a reference to a special T.U. in Germany (1913) called the 'Peaceful Union,' backed chiefly by large employers, who, by virtue of their ability to finance the organization, exercised and achieved the ends in view." But what I cannot understand is why a *W.E.A. audience* should feel "much amusement" at a Peaceful Union of such a type.

J.F.H.

#### BOOKS RECEIVED.

*The Meaning of National Guilds.* By M. B. Reckitt and C. E. Bechhofer. (Palmer & Hayward, 7/6 net.)

*Satire and Sentiment.* By W. N. Ewer. (*The Herald*. 1/6 net.)

*Greek Political Thought: Plato and His Predecessors.* By Ernest Barker, M.A. (Methuen, 14/- net.)

# The Plebs League

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GEO. MASON

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## OBJECT.

To further the interests of Independent working-class education as a partisan effort to improve the position of Labour in the present, and ultimately to assist in the abolition of wage-slavery.

## METHODS.

The formation of local branches to bring together individual members in order to promote classes for the study of Social Science, in connection with the Central Labour College (now the Labour College), such Classes to be maintained and controlled, wherever possible, by Trades Unions, Trades Councils, or other working-class organizations; and the linking-up of these branches into Districts (or Divisions) with a District (or Divisional) Committee appointed by the branches.

The issuing of a monthly magazine, mainly devoted to the discussion of Labour questions, theoretical and practical.

The assistance in every way of the development of the Central Labour College (now the Labour College), or of any other working-class institution, and their maintenance of a definitely working-class policy.

## MEMBERSHIP.

Open to all who endorse the object of the League.

Each Member shall pay 1/- a year to the Central Fund towards general expenses, publications, &c.

All expenses incurred by District organizations shall be met by an additional payment from members within that area.

## MANAGEMENT.

An Executive composed of delegates elected by ballot of local branches representing the District (or Division), together with a Secretary-Treasurer and Magazine Editor elected at the Annual Meet.

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