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TRADE UNIONISM : Past and Future
Mark Starr

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THE PLEBS

I can promise to be candid but not impartial.

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EDITORIAL NOTES

SEVENTEEN THOUSAND. Let us have it in figures, too:—17,000. No, it is *not* the guaranteed nett sale of The PLEBS. What we're anxious to know is—**WHY** it isn't!

For this reason:—Last year, 1922-23, the total number of students enrolled in classes conducted under the auspices of the National Council of Labour Colleges was over 11,000. This year, according to the Annual Report of the N.C.L.C. (now in the press) the figure will be nearer 17,000. Now the circulation of The PLEBS—let us be perfectly candid, as per monthly promise—is just under 5,000.

Five thousand seventeen thousand.

What about it ?

Those 17,000 men and women attending the classes are "our" public. Can we reach them *all* ? If not, why not ?

We make one change this month which we hope is going to help us reach a good many more of them straight away—a reduction in price. We're perfectly ready to make other changes—if they seem to us likely to help in this same direction.

But whatever we may do, and whatever changes we may make, we shall still be dependent upon those Plebs actually concerned in the sale of the magazine for the increase in circulation we want to secure. We can't afford extensive advertising. We must leave it to you to do the pushing. Will you make an extra effort this month ? If we can get the circulation of The PLEBS up to *half* that 17,000, we shall begin to have a margin over and above working expenses.

It can be done, if there's the *will* to do it.

May we point out that the new price of the magazine lends itself to a "cheap and easy" instalment system. A penny a week now buys The PLEBS. Is it not possible for that penny

By
Instalments.

a week to be collected from every student of a class—the magazines being distributed on publication ? A group of enthusiastic Plebs in the Liverpool area are trying a more ambitious scheme, which might well be copied in other districts. A Students' Association has been formed, with an "all in" subscription of 6d. a week. That sum covers class fees, membership sub. to Plebs League, and subscription to The PLEBS and the Labour Research Dept. *Monthly Circular* ; leaving a small margin for a local fund, to be expended as the members decide. It is an excellent plan, and it could be modified in various ways to suit the needs of different groups.

But at all events give the Penny-a-Week Plan a trial.

Admirers of our British Universities, when confronted with extracts from the works of Upton Sinclair or W. T. Colyer describing the way in which the gentlemen who find the dollars call the tune in educational institutions on the other side of the Atlantic, have been wont piously to exclaim, "Thank God, we are not as these Americans." The case of Prof. Toynbee, reported in the press this last month, will make it rather difficult for them to take this line in future. The professor occupied the chair of Modern Greek at King's College, London ; which chair was endowed by well-to-do Greek gentlemen, with the sole aim, of course, of spreading the refining influences of Hellenic culture in a commercialised and sordid-minded age.

The Case of
(Ex)-Professor
Toynbee.

Laudably enough, Mr. Toynbee recently travelled to Greece and Asia Minor—to refresh his Hellenic spirit at the Pierian spring, so to speak. But at the time of his visit the Pierian spring business was “off”—and the descendants of the Athenians, with Mr. Lloyd George's blessing, were playing hell in Turkish Asia Minor. Mr. Toynbee returned, and wrote a book in which he expressed himself frankly on the subject of Greek atrocities. No one, apparently, accuses him of publishing anything untrue, or even dubious. But his book was very different from the official Greek propaganda. Accordingly, the Greek capitalists who put up the cash for the *purely non-political, non-partisan* Greek chair have now forced his resignation. It is scarcely necessary for us to point the moral of this Little Tale. We leave it to Plebeians to make use of it in their propaganda—along with the Story of the Strikebreaker's Millions and the W.E.A. Textbooks referred to on a later page.

TWO PLEBS SUMMER SCHOOLS

AS announced previously, it was decided at Culcheth last August to run, if practicable two Summer Schools of one week each this year, with the object of catering for as many of our tutors, students and supporters as possible. The following arrangements have now been made, and we urge all our readers to make them known as widely as they can, and to do their best to arouse interest in the Schools in their own locality. Already, as we have reported, one or two districts are offering “free scholarships” at the Summer Schools to the students of their classes. This

is an idea which might well be generally followed.

Book your places early for either (or both) of these events. It will be no good wishing afterwards that you had made up your mind sooner. These two places should cater for all Plebeians, and as considerable financial risk is involved the organisers want the lists filling up as soon as possible.

We will book up instalments and keep in touch with all who wish to be at either or both schools. Write and tell us what you intend to do.

FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED!

JUNE 7TH TO JUNE 14TH.

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Tennis, Bowling, Cricket. The sea within a few minutes' walk. Wonderful gardens and the moors within easy distance.

An ideal place for a holiday.

Dramatic performances, dances and excursions.

Terms, £3 3s.

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**BISPHAM HOLIDAY
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Programme will be issued later.

Tennis, Bowling, Cricket. The sea at the end of the garden.

Places have been reserved in the House.

Terms, 56s. per week. Places in Tents in the grounds, 45s. 6d.

Entertainments, etc., will be arranged for those who do not wish to attend lectures.

NIKOLAI LENIN

Born April 10th 1870

Died Jan. 21st 1924

This brilliant character-study of the dead leader, by Karl Radek, appeared in "New Russia" a few months ago. We reprint it with grateful acknowledgments to that journal. Not only as an intimate portrait, but as a penetrating commentary on revolution and revolutionists by one who is himself both a leader and a thinker, it is a worthy tribute to "this Moses, who led the slaves from the land of bondage."

LIKE everything else in nature, Lenin was born, has developed, has grown. When Vladimir Ilyitch once observed me glancing through a collection of his articles written in the year 1903, which had just been published, a sly smile crossed his face, and he remarked with a laugh: "It is very interesting to read what stupid fellows we were!" But I do not here intend to compare the shape of Lenin's skull at the age of ten, twenty, or thirty, with the skull of the man who presided over the sessions of the Central Committee of the Party or the Council of People's Commissars. Our subject is not simply Lenin as leader, but as living human being. P. B. Axelrod, one of the fathers of Menshevism, who hates Lenin from the bottom of his soul, related, in one of the philippics with which he sought to convince me of the harmfulness of Bolshevism in general and of Lenin in particular, how Lenin went abroad for the first time, and how he went walking and bathing with him. "I felt at that time," said Axelrod, "that here was a man who would become the leader of the Russian Revolution. Not only was he an educated Marxist—there were many of these—but he knew what he wanted to do and how it was to be done. There was something of the smell of Russian earth about him." Pavel Borisovitch Axelrod does not smell of the earth. He is one who reasons at home in his own study, and the whole tragedy of his life lies in the fact that at a time when there was no Labour movement in Russia he thought out the lines upon which such a Labour movement should develop, and when it developed on different lines he was frightfully offended—and to-day he roars with rage at the disobedient child. But people often observe in others that which is lacking in themselves, and Axelrod's words with regard to Lenin point out precisely those characteristics which make Lenin a leader.



It is impossible to be a leader of the working class without knowing the whole history of that class. The leaders of the Labour movement must know the history of the Labour movement ; without this knowledge there can be no leader, just as nowadays there can be no great general who could be victorious with the least expenditure of force unless he knew the history of strategy. The history of strategy is not a collection of recipes on how to win a war, for a situation once described never repeats itself. But the mind of the general becomes practised in strategy by its express study ; this study renders him elastic in war, permits him to observe the dangers and possibilities which the merely empirically trained general cannot see. The history of the Labour movement does not tell us what to do, but it makes it possible to compare our position with situations which have already been experienced by our class, so that in various decisive moments we are enabled to see our path clearly, and to recognise approaching danger.

But we cannot get to know the history of the Labour movement

properly without being thoroughly acquainted with the history of capitalism, with its economic and political mechanism. Lenin knows the history of capitalism as do but few of Marx's pupils. It is no mere knowledge of the written word—here comrade Riazanov could give him five points start—but he has thought out Marx's theory as no one else has done. Let us for instance take the small pamphlet which he wrote at the time of our conflict with the trade union movement; in it he calls Bukharin a syndicalist, an eclectic, and a great sinner in numerous other respects. This polemical pamphlet contains a few lines devoted to the differences between dialectics and eclectics, lines not cited in any collection of articles on historical materialism, but which say more about it than whole chapters from much longer books. Lenin has independently grasped and thought out the theory of historical materialism as no one else has been able to do, for the reason that he has studied it with the same object in view as Marx had when elaborating the theory.

Lenin entered the movement as the embodiment of the *Will to Revolution*, and he studied Marxism, the evolution of capitalism, and the evolution of socialism, from the point of view of their revolutionary significance. Plekhanov was a revolutionist too, but he was not possessed by the Will to Revolution, and despite his great importance as a teacher of the Russian Revolution, he could only teach its algebra and not its arithmetic. Herein lies the point of transition from Lenin the theorist to Lenin the politician.

Lenin combined Marxism with general working-class strategy, but at the same time he applied it concretely to the strategic task involving the fate of the Russian working class. It may be said that at the Army Staff Academy he studied not only Clausewitz, Moltke, and their like, but he studied at the same time, as no one else in Russia, the territory of the future Russian proletarian war. Herein lies his genius—in his intimate contact with his field of activity.

I must take some other opportunity of debating why so great a mind as that of Rosa Luxemburg was not capable of understanding the rightness of Lenin's principles on the origin of Bolshevism. I can only state the fact. Rosa Luxemburg did not grasp concretely the economic and political difference between the fighting conditions of the Russian proletariat and those of the proletariat of Western Europe. Therefore she inclined to Menshevism in the year 1904. Menshevism, regarded historically, was the policy of the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia, and of those strata of the proletariat most closely related to the petty bourgeoisie. Russian Menshevism was an attempt at transferring the tactics of the West-European Labour movement to Russia. If we read an article by

Axelrod or Martov on the need for the working class "to learn to stand on its own feet," it appears exceedingly plausible to anyone who has grown up in the Western European movement. I remember very well that when I became acquainted with Russian social-democratic polemics during the first revolution, but was not yet familiar with concrete Russian actuality, I could not comprehend how anybody could deny such elementary truths. To-day it is historically proved that all the speeches delivered by the Mensheviks on the "independence of the Labour movement" were in reality only speeches on the necessity of the Russian Labour movement subordinating itself to the Russian bourgeoisie.

To-day it is most interesting to read the controversy on the famous first paragraph of the Party Statutes, the paragraph which led to the split of the Social Democratic Party into Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. At that time Lenin's demand that only the members of illegal organisations were to be counted as party members appeared highly sectarian. But what was the real point in question? Lenin sought to prevent the confused ideas of certain intellectuals from determining the policy of the Labour Party. Before the first revolution any malcontent of a physician or lawyer who happened to have read Marx styled himself a social democrat, though at bottom he was only a Liberal. Even when they entered an illegal organisation, even when they had broken with their petty-bourgeois way of living, history shows many intellectuals to have remained Liberals at the bottom of their souls. But the limitation of membership in the Party to such persons as were willing to face the dangers of belonging to an illegal organisation had undoubtedly the advantage of lessening the danger of bourgeois ascendancy in the Labour Party, and permitted the revolutionary working-class spirit to dominate the party organisations, however much filled with intellectual elements. But in order to be able to grasp this, in order to be even prepared to split the Party on this account, it was necessary to be as closely bound up with Russian realities as was Lenin, in his capacity of Russian Marxist and Russian revolutionist. . . .

Lenin's way of knowing Russian actuality is another point in which he differs from all others who have aspired towards leadership over the Russian proletariat. Not only does he *know* Russian actuality, he sees and feels it as well. At every turning point in the history of the Party, and especially at the moment when we seized power and the fate of 150 million people hung on the decisions of the Party, I have been amazed at Lenin's store of what the English call "common sense." It may be remarked that when we are speaking of a man of whom we are convinced that his like will not recur for a century, it is but a poor compliment to praise his common sense. But it is just in this that his greatness as a politician lies.

When Lenin has to decide on an important question he does not think of abstract historical categories, of ground rents, surplus values, absolutism or liberalism. He thinks of Sobakevitch, of Gessen, of Sydor from Tver Province, of the Putilov worker, of the policeman on the street, and of the effect of the measures on the *mujik* Sydor and on the workman Onufria as bearers of the revolution.

I shall never forget my talk with Ilyitch before the conclusion of the Brest-Litovsk peace. Every argument which we brought up against the conclusion of the Treaty rebounded from him like peas from a wall. He employed the simplest argument : A war cannot be conducted by a party of good revolutionists, who, having seized their own bourgeoisie by the throat, is yet incapable of finishing affairs with the German bourgeoisie. "The *mujik* must carry on the war," was the reply. "But don't you see that the *mujik* voted against the war?" Lenin asked me. "Excuse me, when and how did he vote against it?" "He voted with his feet, he is running away from the front." And for him that settled the matter. . . . It was necessary that the *mujik* should touch with his hands the earth which the revolution had given him ; it was necessary that he be confronted with the danger of losing this earth, and then he would defend it. . . .

Lenin never permits himself to be blinded to reality by any pre-conceived formula ; and he has the courage to throw yesterday's formula overboard as soon as it disturbs his grasp of this reality. Before our seizure of power we issued, as revolutionary internationalists, the slogan of the peoples' peace against the governments' peace. And suddenly we found ourselves in the position of a Workers' Government, surrounded by peoples who had not yet succeeded in overthrowing their capitalist governments. "How can we conclude a peace with the Hohenzollern government?" was the question put by many comrades. Lenin answered mischievously : "You are worse than hens. A hen cannot make up its mind to step over a circle drawn around it with chalk, but it can at least justify itself on the ground that the circle was drawn by a strange hand. But we have drawn up our formula with our own hands, and now you see formula only, and not the reality. Our formula of peace to be concluded by the peoples had for its object the awakening of the masses against the military and capitalist government. Now you want us to go to ruin, and to let the capitalist governments carry off the victory, in the name of our revolutionary formula."

His genius contains another trait. After he has set himself a certain goal, he seeks for the means leading to this goal through

reality. He is not content with having fixed his aim, he thinks out *concretely* and completely everything necessary for the attainment of that aim. He does not merely work out a plan of campaign, but the whole organisation of the campaign at the same time. . . . In Lenin's personality the great politician and the great political organiser are combined.

How all this happened to be combined in one man, God only knows (Comrade Stefanov and the commission for combatting religion will kindly excuse). History has her own apparatus for distilling brandy, and no Cheka can detect her. The German bourgeoisie could not manage to unite Germany, and somewhere, on a small landed estate grange, history set one of her machines in action, and with the aid of God or the devil, that is, by molecular work, she created *Bismarck*, who then fulfilled the task. If we read his first reports, if we follow his policy step by step, we are obliged to ask ourselves how it was possible for a landowner to possess such an understanding of the whole of European actuality.

The same thought arises every time we think over the history of our Party, the history of revolution, and Ilyitch. For fifteen years we looked on while this man was fighting over every comma in the resolutions, against every *ism* invented during the last twenty-five years, from *Khvoostism* to *Empiriocretism*. For Lenin every such *ism* has always been the embodiment of some real enemy, existing either in other classes or in the working class, but in any case in reality. These *isms* were the symbols of reality, and he absorbed the whole of this reality into himself, studied it, thought it out, until the "underground man" proved himself the most earthly man of Russian reality. History offers no second example of such a transition from subterranean revolutionist to statesman. This combination of the characteristics of theorist, politician, and organiser has made Lenin the leader of the Russian Revolution. And that he should be the only one universally recognised as such the "human touch" was required—the quality which has made Lenin the beloved hero of the Russian Revolution. . . .

For many people the truth is deadly ; it is deadly even for many classes. If the bourgeoisie were to grasp the truth about itself, and were permeated with this truth, it would be defeated already, for who can go on fighting when the truth of history tells him that he is not only condemned to death, but that his corpse will be thrown into the sewer? The bourgeoisie is blind and dumb to its fate. But a revolutionary class needs the truth, for truth is the knowledge of reality Lenin tells the proletariat the truth and the truth only, however depressing it may be. When workers hear him speaking, they know that there is not a single empty phrase in all his speech.

He tells us to inform ourselves on reality.' At one time I was living at Davos with a Bolshevnik workman dying of consumption. At that time the right of self-determination of nationalities was being debated, and we Polish Communists were opposed to Lenin's views. The comrade of whom I speak, after having read my theses against Lenin, said: "What you have written is perfectly convincing to me; but whenever I have been opposed to Ilyitch it has always turned out afterwards that I was wrong." This is how the leading party functionaries think, and this is the reason for Lenin's authority in the Party.

But the workers do not think so. They do not feel bound to Lenin because he has been in the right a thousand times, but because, whenever he has been in the wrong, whenever a mistake has been committed under his leadership, he always admitted openly: "We have made a mistake, and therefore we have been defeated here; this mistake must be made good in such and such a manner." Many have asked him why he speaks so openly of mistakes made. I do not know why Lenin does it, but the results of this course of action may be plainly seen. The workman is much too enlightened to believe in redeeming saviours any longer. When Lenin speaks of his mistakes he hides nothing, he leads the worker into his own laboratory of thought, he makes it possible for the worker to take part in forming the final decision, and the workers see in him the leader who represents their laboratory, the embodiment of their class struggle. A great class, itself needing absolute truth, loves with its whole heart a leader who is himself a truth-loving human being, one who tells the truth about himself. From such a leader the worker can bear any truth, even the hardest. Human beings have faith in themselves only when they conceal nothing, when they know everything about themselves, even the most unfavourable possibilities, and yet feel that they can say: "In spite of everything . . ." Lenin helps the working class to a full knowledge of every decaying and decomposing element of its own existence, and yet enables it to say in the end: "I am His Majesty the Proletariat, the future ruler and creator of life." This is another factor in Lenin's greatness.

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Party which not only bears the responsibility for the destiny of one-sixth of the globe but which is at the same time the main lever of proletarian victory, the Russian Communists and all revolutionists among the proletariats of every country are filled with the thought and the wish that this Moses, who has led the slaves from the land of bondage, may pass with us into the promised land.

KARL RADEK.

The REVIVAL of the TRADES COUNCILS

Here are two short articles for and against the movement to revive the Trades Councils ; the first putting forward the view that industrial organisation, free from "top-heaviness," is an essential adjunct to parliamentary-political organisation ; the second claiming that the Trades Councils are obsolete weapons. We suggest that this is precisely one of the questions which every "live" class will find time to discuss, and we hope to receive readers' views on the subject.

VOTING POWER AND ACTING POWER

THE proposal to revive the Trades Councils deserves serious consideration and support for many reasons. There is the divided and disastrous retreat since 1920 of the Trades Unions—a retreat which only now is being ended. There is that medley of organisation which produces such pitiable scenes as at the last T.U. Congress at Plymouth. And while we can't "unscramble eggs" we must take steps to see that mistakes are not repeated.

Now there is no denying that the growth of larger and larger unions brings the problem of top-heaviness—the danger that individual members will find their organisations unwieldy and will lose interest. Further, the overshadowing success of Labour in the recent General Election should not blind us to the fact that the political position is in reality one of stale-mate, which enhances the need of efficient industrial organisation. We recall that the present Labour Premier wrote (*Socialist Review*, 1919) "The general strike, if properly used, is no mean weapon against a Parliament elected by fraud." If that stale-mate is ended by a coalition, Labour will have a long row to hoe before it attains office *with power*. Even then, industrial power to prevent any recourse to Fascism by the minority will be a vital necessity.

Society does not run like a well-managed debating club. Simultaneously with Labour taking office comes the threat of a railway strike. Some Labour M.P.s, lacking in Keir Hardiness, are pausing in their previous pitiful cry of "What *can* we do," and are fearing that the locomotive men will be the speedy death of a Labour Government. If a Labour Party had confidence in a united industrial backing the cry would be "What *can't* we do." It would say to the railway OWNERS, "Settle or be nationalised. Society cannot exist without railway transport and if you persist in your action, in the name of the community we shall brush you aside and *by the help of the rail-*

waymen operate the lines." How will the Labour Premier break the Trusts in building material without the co-operation of cement and brick workers, the bricklayers and other sections of the rank and file workers, organised *as workers*? Surely our old cry of "Organisation for the day of battle and also for the victorious morrow" had within it the marrow of truth.

Thus organisation must be two-fold—industrial and political. At present even in the political Labour Party industrial demarcations appear, for the power of the purse held by the great unions overrides local and geographical considerations in the choice, success and later behaviour of the Labour candidates.

Two tendencies are at work in the industrial Labour Movement at the moment: one centripetal, the other centrifugal. The first wants to increase the powers of the General Council, to make it a real General Staff. The second is searching to distribute power to local centres—the Trades Councils. It would probably be a mistake to give the Trades Councils representation in addition to the strange medley of unions now in the T.U. Congress. If the 547 Councils were federated by districts and nationally, they would do their work better apart from the present T.U.C.

The work of the Trades Councils would be propagandist and educational. They would be centres of publicity and assistance of any union in a dispute as well as spreading Trade Unionism in backward areas or popularising a general fighting programme, *e.g.*, forty-four hour working week and adequate maintenance for unemployed. Where no such facilities existed they could build up in conjunction with the local Labour Party the social side of the movement. Most important of all, it would be their job to tackle the problems of amalgamation, to assist guilds in industries where these are possible, and to work out a practical alliance with the local Co-operative movement and the political Labour Party.

There is nothing here that has not already been partly adopted. The Building Trade Workers in 1923 supplied the Trade Councils with details of their dispute. The "Back to the Union Campaign" was assisted by the Councils. In some areas a sub-committee of the Trades Council runs classes or the T.C. is affiliated to the local Labour College. The Councils of Action (1920) were not the imaginations of theorists; and on any similar occasion we should want *doing* and not *voting* power on a territorial basis.

In the smallest of villages the Government has its Post Office by which it can spy upon our letters. The Army, Navy, Police Force, Labour Exchanges, Local Government officials, and so forth, reveal a wide-spread organisation ready to act. Labour, too, must have its organisation for doing things which will be needed whether it is controlling the political machinery or not. The national unions

would be well advised to assist financially their branches' attempt to participate in the work of the Trades Councils, and the General Council to recognise any national federation of those bodies for consultative, and even in some things for executive, purposes.

Remember, the Trades Councils are formed on a definitely *class*—working-class—basis. Their outlook must, and will, embrace the whole field of working-class activity, present and future, and not merely concentrate either on parliamentary possibilities or on the particular problems of this or that industry. For these reasons I repeat the opinion I expressed in *Trade Unionism : Past and Future*—“The revival of the Trades Councils is the best line of activity at the present moment.”

MARK STARR.

“TALKING-SHOPS”

DIVIDED, infinitely more divided than it ought to be, or need be, into the two lines of political and industrial advance, British Labour seems to have complacently settled down to the belief that separate structural organisation of its two wings is both natural and necessary.

It is singular how on this question we have moved in circles. The Trades Union Congress was dying, or at least was sick. Their local counterpart, the Trades Councils were also ageing, and the young blood of Unionism, despising these old garments, looked to a new grouping of the Unions, nationally and locally, with new crystallisations in the workshop, as affording a better outlet for their vigour, and providing a stronger structural organisation to put against Capitalism.

At the same time the T.U.C. and the Trades Councils fell under the displeasure of the active political Socialist. The old structures seemed doomed, when lo ! the Trades Union Congress bends to the wind. There is reform, and a gesture to youth. Modern ideas of industrial organisation are reflected (not much more) in its new garb. Suddenly, too, the rapprochement between the T.U.C. and the Labour Party, which had been growing during the war, springs into prominence. Joint offices, joint meetings, joint action, and so on no end, is announced. The criticising Socialist is silenced. The modern operation of rejuvenation is completed by the sacking of the secretary. And so we got back to much where we were. The dual organisations appear to flourish mightily. Yet how much of it is compromise and wastage.

And locally? Here the tendency has been the other way. In 1918 when our industrial reformers were all looking the other way the Labour Party began to gobble up the Trades Councils. They

have succeeded fairly well. And now comes this movement for the "revival" of Trades Councils which can mean nothing else but an emphasis of the idea of separate political and industrial interests for the workers, incidentally resulting in the formation of the worst and least effective kind of industrial structure, while seriously hindering the effective political machine.

Here again the head touches the tail of the comet, and a circle is completed. Our friends who equally agreed at one time that Trades Councils were out of date, or who at any rate made no great stir at their conversion, have now come back to their vomit. They want the Trades Councils back again. The dear delightful old Talking Shops where we solemnly sat, or stood, and talked and talked and talked, but never DID—unless one smoked, which one did with a vengeance.

I quite understand what is behind this "revival." It is the sheer need of a field for propaganda. Headed off from the national field by older and astute leaders, the principal advocates of revival are vigorous exponents of new schools of industrial thought who see advantage in these Councils as "ready-made schools" for their exploitation.

This exaggeration and artificial enlargement of the propagandist field, always, however, carries its own cure, and the tragic thing is that this is precisely what would wreck the newly revived Councils, or at least add to their inherent anæmia.

It is curious that some of the advocates of this new move still frankly recognise the insufficiency of the old Trades Councils—their almost entirely masculine outlook, educational insufficiency, exclusiveness, and want of social endeavours, failure to represent the women, and so on, and hence they propose to add functions remedying these defects, to the normal work of the old Trades Councils. No reference is made to the fact that these things are already being done by Local Labour Parties. All this new confusion, duplicate organisation, and working-class wastefulness is to be indulged in merely that a new cradle may be found for industrial speakers whose logic is presumably too profound to be heard at street corners, as were the doctrines of the generation of Socialists who preceded them—and who *did* succeed in making effective *political* organisations of the Trades Councils that were.

Let not the position of the political organiser who objects to the "revival" of Trades Councils be misunderstood. The bulk of Trades Councils to-day are of course Local Labour Parties combining both functions. These are the ideal organisations, and it is not the revival of such as these of which we are speaking. Nor too, does one demur at the Trades Councils who in certain parts of the country have found special functions and plenty of work to

do, and who manage to creditably exist side by side with the Local Labour Party. What is objected to is the attempt to stay the process of Labour's evolution by the revival or the establishment of Trades Councils throughout the country in places side by side with Local Labour Parties. I believe that this step in working-class organisation is a distinctly retrograde one and can only result in a loss of efficiency and in loading the Labour Movement with overlapping and competing organisations, not to mention competing and quarrelling officials.

The work of Trades Councils forms a splendid page in Labour's history. But we do not dwell in the past. The great work of Trades Councils was done in days when no great Labour political Movement throbbed through the country, and when indeed, more than to-day schools of thought flourished which doubted the power of politics. Despite this, Trades Councils did educate and unify. They were preparing the ground.

It was during the revival of political labour in 1917-18 that the coming of a Labour Government first threw its shadow before it. From that time Trades Councils of the old order became out-of-date. It became Labour's business in the constituencies to concentrate on political organisation. The hour had struck when Trades Councils could no longer usefully confine themselves to their past functions. To remain effective or alive they must then add to them the work of helping to elect Labour men and women to governing bodies both local and national. After all, this step was but a short one but it fundamentally changed the outlook of Trades Councils and, if we may test the change by the happenings of the past few years, it seems to have succeeded.

To-day Local Labour Parties and their subsidiary organisations spread into the remotest parts of the country. Their activities embrace a field far wider than that ever covered by the Trades Councils. Their foundations rest on a broader democracy which embraces both men and women. To seek now to go back and revive the old corpses or to establish fresh Trades Councils in areas where they never existed, savours too much of disruption and of injury to the growing political Movement to be able to enlist my support. The necessities of industrial organisation do not either in my opinion rest upon the same geographical foundations as the political needs of the hour, and the attempt to graft geographical organisations on to our industrial growth seems like throwing sand in the wheels or trying to turn them the wrong way. We have moved somewhat since Trades Councils were the order of the day, and I don't think we want them back again.

H. DRINKWATER.

THE MAIN PROBLEM—ROUSING THE RANK & FILE

This letter from a "rank-and-filer," commenting on the articles in our November and December issues on the question of increasing the powers of the General Council, forms an interesting appendix to the discussion on Trades Councils.

DEAR COMRADE,—I endorse all that Geo. Barker, Will Lawther and Ted Williams say regarding giving greater powers to the T.U.C. General Council.

But can they get the rank and file of the trades unions to endorse their views? I am afraid not. I am a rank-and-filer, and from what I know of my fellows, I can only say, that you are up against a stone wall when you mention subjects like this. They look with suspicion on any bodies asking for more powers; they seem to think that the leaders have too much power as it is.

A lot of them still believe in local action; they have not got out of the habit of looking at things from a local point of view. A great many of the rank and file look upon the various Conferences and Congresses as a sort of annual holiday for some of the more fortunate members; they frankly say that they are beanfeasts and a waste of their hard-earned money.

These views are not held by a few but I should say thousands throughout the movement. As long as that spirit prevails increased powers would be useless.

In my opinion the management and methods of some of the Unions are responsible for a great deal of the apathy of the members. Another thing is, that some of the rules are antiquated and want revising. There is also a great deal of craft and industry consciousness which will have to be removed before we can get a solid front. They don't seem to realise that they are all up against the same economic conditions, whether they be skilled, semi-skilled, or unskilled. Until they realise that factor we won't make progress towards solidarity. And if the two important factors which face the workers to-day (economic conditions and the F. B. I. with all its ramifications) don't make them understand the fact that they will have to work out their own destiny or else remain wage slaves to the end of the chapter, nothing will!

I suggest that all unions and their branches should pass a resolution urging on the Trades Union Congress the necessity of taking up the question of Independent Working-Class Education such as is provided by the N.C.L.C., whereby you can get an intelligent rank and file. When you have accomplished that, then you can have hopes of getting increased powers for the T.U.C. General Council.

JAMES CLEMENT.

ROSA LUXEMBURG and HUGO WOLF

ON the 15th January, 1919, Rosa Luxemburg (along with Karl Liebknecht) was brutally murdered in Berlin by a group of military defenders of the propertied system. To the middle class the hapless victim was a wild-eyed maniac who had conspired and plotted for a revolution; and she was portrayed as one devoid of those mental and spiritual qualities which respond to the higher and finer impulses of human existence. In the socialist ranks everyone knew Rosa Luxemburg as a dauntless champion of the working class; but she was also recognised as the unchallenged intellectual leader of the German Movement.*

And in addition to Rosa Luxemburg, leader and scholar, there was yet another Rosa, who enjoyed and appreciated poetry, music, and all the arts in those few leisured moments which she enjoyed when not actively engaged in the work of the class struggle. We get a glimpse at this other Rosa in the letters which she wrote from prison to her friend Sophie, the wife of Karl Liebknecht.†

It may not be amiss to devote a little attention to the intellectual life that Rosa Luxemburg held in spheres outside that of theoretical Socialism. Even here, however, it will be noticed that the splendid knowledge of Marxism acted as a guiding thread in her appreciation of culture. In her *Letters from Prison* we find her making keen judgments on various aspects of modern literature, particularly poetry. And some surprise has been expressed, in certain quarters, because in these same letters, she displayed such a passionate interest in music and especially in the songs of Hugo Wolf. There is nothing surprising in this. The musicians, of all artists, have been the greatest rebels. A knowledge of music is certainly not an indispensable weapon in the class struggle. One may understand and appreciate the fugues of Bach, the operas of Mozart, the symphonies of Beethoven, the music-dramas of Wagner, and the songs of Schubert, Schumann, and Wolf—and yet remain ignorant of the social ends of capitalism. But to know and enjoy the works of these great masters is certainly no handicap. Such a knowledge would indicate that one had attained a part of that general culture which Lenin himself emphasised, in a lecture to the Young Communists, as helpful in the equipment of every serious member of the Labour movement.

* See Comrade Philips Price's survey of her work and influence in his new book *Germany in Transition*.

† Reviewed by W. H. in *The PLEBS* for November last.

In their own sphere the great pioneers in Art and Music had to overcome reactionary tendencies as obstinate as anything that the social revolutionary has to combat in the political field. It is interesting to note that the great periods of transition in musical form coincide with periods of social struggle. Bach, following upon a period of religious and political struggles, opens up new avenues in his art. Mozart and Beethoven nobly responded, in their music, to the revolutionary ferment of 1789. Wagner was a valiant fighter in the 1848 upheaval; through the dazzling genius of his art, in the greatest music-drama ever composed, he mercilessly exposed the devastation that follows in the wake of the cursed and greedy quest for gold. These courageous men were close to, and interested in the great social struggles of their time. Their music breathes the enthusiasm and feeling and sympathy of the great events that inspired it. And this is the reason why Rosa Luxemburg, shut in her lonely cell, cut off from the surging events of the outside world, could, by the aid of her extensive culture, commune with the great master-minds of music who spoke to her, as comrades, in a language which she thoroughly comprehended.

The songs of Hugo Wolf seem to have stirred her most deeply. The tragic life of Hugo Wolf, his desperate struggle against poverty, and his shining musical genius, expressed in the greatest songs ever written, were bound to appeal to Rosa Luxemburg's sympathetic nature. Hugo Wolf was born in Austria in 1860. As a youth he lived in Vienna under the most appalling conditions. For a considerable period he was able to obtain only one scanty meal a day. This mode of existence was, no doubt, one of the factors that led to his premature death. It was not until, thanks to the hospitality of a friend, he was freed from his desperate fight against drudgery and poverty, that his genius could find expression. In a very short period he had wedded some of the most beautiful lyrics in the German language to incomparable music. But the poverty of his early days, and the strain of his life, began to tell, and at thirty-eight years of age he was stricken with the disease which necessitated his removal to an asylum. He died in 1897, at the age of forty-three, and was buried in the same cemetery in Vienna where Beethoven and Schubert sleep. Like Beethoven, he had lived and suffered; like Schubert he died, a young man, with many of his songs unsung.

It was such powerful poems of revolt as Goethe's *Prometheus* that drew out the most vigorous element in Wolf's genius. Here Goethe reveals Prometheus defying and cursing Zeus. In Wolf's hands the dramatic situation is tremendously increased. Goethe, in the poem, only makes Prometheus speak. In the song Zeus thunders throughout in the accompaniment. It is probably the

greatest song, embodying the spirit of revolt, that has ever been written.

On the other hand Hugo Wolf could, with equal genius, compose love songs of simple beauty. One of these, set to a Spanish poem, was a great favourite with Rosa Luxemburg; she quotes the words in full, in her *Letters* :—

*“ Be praise to him through whom these worlds arose !
How wonderful he made this span increasing !
He made the ocean’s endless deep repose,
He made the ships that pass across unceasing,
He made yon paradise of calmed radiance,
He made the Earth, dear—and thy countenance.”*

And she writes to her friend :—

Sonitchka, if you have never heard that sung to the accompaniment of Wolf’s music, you cannot imagine the intensity of passion in those two concluding words.

The ablest of present-day musical critics, Mr. Ernest Newman, in a lengthy and critical examination of Wolf’s music, refers to this same song thus :—

Every other composer, it is safe to say, would have made the last line the climax of the whole song, both in colour and intensity; and we should never have known that there was a better way if the genius of Wolf had not revealed it to us.

He goes on to show that the magic of the song lies in the stroke of genius that led Wolf to make the singer sing the last two words in softened tones—the very “intensity of passion” which so moved Rosa Luxemburg.

The great fighters on behalf of the masses are not persons with one-eyed brains or single-track minds. They are people who can absorb and appreciate the great cultural achievements of the race. The classics never had a more appreciative student than Marx. And the scope of Trotsky’s latest book is a critical examination of art and literature in Russia since the revolution.

There is nothing surprising in this. The aim of the Labour movement is something more than the freeing of the bodies of the masses from the grip of the master class. We stand for political and economic freedom because that is the first step towards the spiritual and cultural emancipation of the working class. And that is why our movement attracts such minds as Rosa Luxemburg’s, and inspires such music as Hugo Wolf’s.

WM. PAUL.

A WORKER looks at IRISH HISTORY

V.—TWENTIETH CENTURY IRELAND

Political Events before and during the War

IT has already been explained how Tory paternalism tried to remove the agrarian grievances which were the core of the Home Rule agitation. British tenants had never received such assistance as that conceded by George Wyndham. Belated attempts to make amends for past confiscations and oppression were, however, little solace for people who by now were firmly determined to do things *for themselves*. The demand for self-government persisted.

After January, 1910, Redmond held the balance of power at Westminster, and the Liberals, under Asquith, made further attempts to satisfy the demand for Home Rule. The third Home Rule Bill (1911) was very similar to that of 1893—a great deal of financial power and a veto were left with the Imperial Parliament. It was rejected twice by the House of Lords in 1913-14; but being passed by the Commons a third time—with the promise of an Amending Act which would give every county the option of remaining outside the Dublin Parliament for a period of six years—the Bill only needed the King's Assent when the War came and it was shelved.

Sinn Fein had throughout opposed the Bill as "totally inadequate." Connolly described it as "the rottenest bargain ever made by a victorious people with a mean, pettifogging, despised Government." Only the Nationalists were prepared to accept it. In Ulster—where the big industrialists needed the British Empire in which to market their ships and machinery, where the great landlords feared the rise of the smaller farmers, and where for centuries religious bigotry and hate had been encouraged by vested interests—the followers of Carson began to arm, despite the safeguards for religious freedom and the Imperial control provided by the Bill. To counteract these Ulster Volunteers armed with German rifles, the Irish Volunteers were enlisted, but their gun-runings were not so undisturbed as those of the Ulstermen.

At first the Liberal Government refused to take "Carson's bluff" seriously, but the Curragh mutiny—when British Army officers (March, 1914) resigned because they anticipated being ordered to coerce Ulster—startled it into recognising the possibility of dangers ahead.

When the European War broke out, Redmond, as a return for Home Rule, pledged Irish support. But the Sinn Fein criticism of this act as premature was strengthened by Asquith's later announcement that while the Government agreed to place the Bill on the Statute Book as it was (September, 1914), it could not become operative at once. The Irish Volunteers in consequence grew in strength, while the recruiting appeals made by Redmond and others fell upon deaf ears.

A general rising was planned for Easter Sunday (23rd April, 1916), but the capture of Sir Roger Casement and the cargo of necessary arms and ammunition spoilt the arrangements. In Dublin, however, on the following Monday, an attempt—which proved unsuccessful—was made to seize the Castle, Trinity College, and the Bank of Ireland. The captured General Post Office was made the headquarters of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic. The rebels were soon surrounded by an overwhelmingly superior British force, and by the following Saturday the Rebellion was crushed and its leaders executed. Alongside the appeal (*cf. Labour Monthly*, July, 1923) of the German Government to be allowed by the French to crush the Ruhr "rebels" in gratitude for a similar service rendered by the Germans against the Communards in 1871, should be placed the fierce denunciations by both Carson and Redmond of the Irish rebels of Easter, 1916. Redmond, speaking for the Nationalist Party, regarded them with "detestation and horror" and was prepared "most cordially" to join with Carson "in everything that can be done to denounce and put down these rebels now and for evermore." Such a revelation of the identity of interest between Orange and Catholic capitalist politicians is worthy of preservation.

The Rebellion forced the politicians to tackle the Irish Problem again, but Mr. Lloyd George's proposal to exclude the six counties was strongly opposed by the Southern Unionists. A convention (March, 1917)—instituted largely to win American favour and participation in the War—was boycotted by the growing Sinn Fein movement, and hence the Convention's proposal, although in advance of previous concessions, had little chance of acceptance. Even this small chance was destroyed by the attempt in 1918 to enforce conscription in Ireland; the attempt proved a ruinous failure. In the post-war General Election, Sinn Fein triumphed; the "half and half" Nationalist Party was swept out of the field. The Republican Parliament, Dail Eireann, vainly claimed recognition at the Peace Conference.

The Home Rule Bill of 1920 contained a plan of a separate Parliament for Ulster with a joint council. But only Ulster Unionists accepted it; Sinn Fein would not hear of a divided Ireland. Then

the British Government tried jack-booting by means of its notorious Black and Tans, but the Sinn Feiners reduced Dublin Castle to impotency. During 1918-21 the Irish Nation successfully ran a separate "invisible" Government based largely on the ecclesiastical units of administration.*

Finally the successful outlaws were invited to London and offered "Dominion status," with the alternative of ruthless military occupation. Members of the Irish Parliament, under the Treaty finally accepted, have to take an oath of allegiance to King George as an acknowledgment of the British Empire. Ireland had to take over £500,000,000 of the British National Debt, whilst she received no compensation for the destruction wrought by the Black and Tans—to go no further back into the story of British wrongs against Ireland. Naval defence was kept within the province of the Imperial Navy. A large section of Dail Eireann refused to accept these terms and the war—now between the Irish Free State troops armed with British munitions and the Republican Irregulars—was continued with bitterness until May 30th, 1923, when De Valera and his followers abandoned the attempt to overthrow the Free State Government by force of arms.

The Free State Government used this truce to appeal to the country for a vote of confidence without which it would be impossible to secure the success of the loan of £20,000,000, failing which Ireland—shattered and ravaged by years of warfare—can never recover. The Free State's opponents attacked it for keeping 10,000 electors—captured Irregulars—in jail. The Irregulars also pleaded in vain to be allowed to "dump" their arms rather than surrender. The Free State Government had in its short life carried out the policy of assisted land purchase and support to new industries. The August Election—although the Government secured a working majority (sixty-three Free State representatives against forty-four Republicans)—revealed that the opposition has still considerable support.

Future Prospects and Geographical Facts

It is difficult to surmise what will happen in the immediate future. In the towns organised Labour is engaged in a bitter struggle to maintain its standard of life. Given time and understanding, the two sections of the working class in Ulster and the Free State will discover their community interest, as also will the capitalist sections. (In the strike of July-October, 1923, the dockers of Belfast struck

* The "land-hungry" labourers and small farmers used this opportunity to seize the larger estates in many parts of the country. Dail Land Courts had to be set up and now the Free State Assistant Legal Adviser claims that only these courts saved the country from "an agrarian revolution."

when ships were diverted to escape the strike ban maintained in the Free State ports.) If war-weary Ireland decides to remain in the British Empire and to be conciliatory about the boundary of the Six Counties—and the talks between Cosgrave and Craig (18-7-23) pointed to an amicable settlement of the matter—the union of North and South may come more quickly than is expected. Geographically, of course, Ireland is a unit, and any scheme, *e.g.*, of using the great potential water-power of the country would best succeed if the arbitrary boundaries of the Free State and Ulster were ignored. Again, tariff difficulties, and those of railway transport and civil administration will be great enough in time to overcome the relics of sectarian hate ; at present the Free State has to support a land customs barrier of 240 miles.

The lessening of economic difference between the North and South will also make for Union. The South is even yet 80 per cent. agricultural, but even Imperial Belfast has to be fed. The Free State is out to develop its industries—leather and woollen and industrial alcohol manufacture—and also to turn the grazing land back to tillage, and for this it will need machinery and ships. And if the Shannon, the Erne, the Bann and the Liffey are to be “harnessed” as part of the 250,000 h.p. continuous which is the total estimate given in the *M. G. Reconstruction No. (26-7-23)*, it will involve the erection of many electrical stations and much electrical plant which would provide a home market for the Northern industries. Again, this will involve a huge outlay of capital, and signs are not lacking* that the American overflow will try to accomplish economic penetration in Erin’s Isle, and although this would not be favourably regarded either by British and Ulster Imperialists, or by idealist Sinn Feiners, it would level out the economic differences between the North and South. Such an electrification scheme is recognised as a vital necessity for Irish industry. For Ireland’s coal is only a 6,500th part of Great Britain’s total, and although Sinn Feiners challenge these figures (see *Colliery Guardian*, 18-8-23) the thinness of the seams, inferior quality of coal, and lack of transport facilities are undeniable. Ireland consumes 5,000,000 tons per annum, but produces only 100,000 tons. Despite fuel shortage, it would be an error to think of Ireland as wholly a grazing and agricultural country. Her factory and industrial exports in 1913 were double her purely agricultural exports, and there has been a greater proportionate increase in the former up to 1921.

* *E.g.*, Pres. Cosgrave (*M.G. Commercial*, 4-10-23) wrote: “. . . in most cases the promoters will go to England for the underwriting of their capital. . . . At the same time if too much reluctance is shown in London to take an interest in Irish affairs, American financiers with an Irish leaning may step in . . .”

Turning to the political future. However much the Republicans may agitate, Ireland will never, while the British Empire continues to be allowed to have her own navy or reject the British claim to control the four chief Irish ports and use Ireland as a base in time of war. (Incidentally, no Workers' Republic is possible in Ireland without a Labour Government in England for the same reason.) Ireland's recent entry into the League of Nations and the Imperial Conference will not alter her position in this respect. The submarine and the aeroplane have made Ireland more than ever the Achilles' heel of Britain—much more than it was at the end of the eighteenth century.

The development of industry will lessen the zeal for the Nationalist Republic, which is an overflow of the past rather than a lead for the future. "The Republican's radicalism is a mixture of Liberal idealism and race hatred." The only Republic possible will be a Workers' Republic—in alliance with the workers of Britain. British Imperialism will drive the remaining forces of rebellious nationalism into a working unity with the Labour movement, uprising in Ireland as elsewhere, whose final triumph will smash not only the chains of Ireland but of the workers throughout the whole world.

MARK STARR.

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Financing "Impartiality"

A short time ago a prominent W.E.A.er, being desirous of emphasising the spotlessness of that organisation, said "We have had money offered us by the Carnegie Trust, but have refused it." Apparently the W.E.A. is not going to be so particular any longer, for the "Labour Press Service" (Jan. 3rd, '24) reported that the Carnegie Trust Fund had decided to finance the publication of W.E.A. textbooks. The trustees of the great strike-breaker and pioneer of the "Open Shop" are going to help the W.E.A. to foster the "Open Mind."

We have asked W. T. Colyer, the author of "Americanism," to write us a little biographical sketch of the late Andrew Carnegie, just so that we may all know where the money comes from! Plebeians will see that these facts are made known whenever the W.E.A., or its next-of-kin, the W.E.T.U.C., appeal for the support of workers' organisations.

And remember—PLEBS TEXTBOOKS get no such assistance. Their issue and sale depend on YOU.

IN his autobiography, published in 1920, Andrew Carnegie enunciated the principle that "the great aim of every boy should be to do something beyond the sphere of his duties—something which attracts the attention of those over him." This preaching was based on practice.

At the very outset of his career, Andrew had attached himself to Thomas Scott, subsequently President of the Pennsylvania Railroad, and had attracted that gentleman's attention in various ways. For example, he communicated to his chief the plans of certain railway trainmen and shopmen who were "in a rebellious mood." The information was obtained from a worker involved who was under personal obligations to Carnegie.

Appreciating such tokens of affection Mr. Scott gave his young friend tips in finance. Andrew's first "flutter" was for \$500 in Adams' Express. His widowed mother mortgaged her little home to provide the necessary but early dividends were at the rate of \$10 per month.

Shortly afterwards the lad "attracted the attention of those over him" by recommending T. T. Woodruff, inventor of the railway sleeping car. Woodruff felt that Carnegie's influence with Scott had helped him, and offered Andrew

an eighth interest in the company formed to exploit the invention. Andrew accepted, borrowed the money for the stock, and once again "got in on a good thing."

All this was before the Civil War. With hostilities came fresh opportunities. Scott was made Assistant Secretary of War in charge of transport. Carnegie went with him and gained inside information concerning steel. In 1863 Carnegie organised the Keystone Bridge Company and in 1866 the Pittsburg Locomotive Works. Forty years later an original \$100 share in the latter concern was worth \$3,000.

Iron and steel were not Andrew's only interests. During 1862 he and a friend had acquired an oil property known as Storey Farm. The purchase price was \$40,000. On a stock basis the farm was subsequently valued at \$5,000,000. At the time of buying no one realised the vastness of the oil reservoirs below.

Henceforth, Andrew never lacked ready money. He set himself to concentrate the control of the steel industry, and was so far successful that it was worth Pierpont Morgan's while to buy him out for the equivalent of 100 millions sterling on the formation of the U.S. Steel Corporation in 1901.

The famous Homestead strike (1892) had ushered in the era of privately hired gunmen as instruments for "settling" industrial disputes. It also resulted in the elimination of Union labour from the Carnegie steel mills.

In 1894 a Congressional Inquiry exposed the fact that the Carnegie Steel Company had been charging the U.S. Government from \$520 to \$700

a ton for steel costing less than \$200 per ton to produce. Moreover the steel was badly made and many accidents resulted from its use. Almost every form of corruption was brought home to the Company's agents. But of course Andrew, so shrewd and keen-sighted in other respects, knew nothing about these frauds!

W. T. COLYER.

BOOKS REVIEWED by PLEBS reviewers

SCIENCE AS WEAPON

The Humanizing of Knowledge. By J. Harvey Robinson (George H. Doran Co., New York. "Workers' Bookshelf" Series).

THIS is an excellent little book by the well-known American historian, Dr. J. H. Robinson.

After twenty-five years of history writing and teaching, he has got fed up with ordinary education. He says that any open-minded historian knows that publishers simply dare not publish history books which tend to undermine the present system. Hence history has to be taught from colourless textbooks, which children are forced to swallow, but which any healthy adult rejects with jocose pleasantries. Thus current history-teaching is a farce. He makes many smashing observations on ordinary education which it is a shame to quote here as the book ought to be read for itself.

As to his general thesis, he points out that Science is de-humanised knowledge. Mankind has found that his passions mislead his judgment, so he has evolved a method of arriving at judgments which is uninfluenced by human passion. But the discovery of cold scientific fact is only half of man's task. The other half consists of utilizing these cold scientific facts. They must be synthesised into a living weapon by which mankind shall emancipate itself from all its miseries.

This is a genteel way of stating the Plebeian's case, *i.e.*, that a Pleb should

- (1) Discover the cold truth.
- (2) Use it to punch the capitalists' jaw.

Dr. Robinson has humanised knowledge; it is now up to the Dietzgenites to humanise Dietzgen.

J. G. C.

A VALIANT FIGHTER

Richard Carlile: Agitator. By G. A. Aldred (Pioneer Press, 61, Farringdon Street, E.C. 4. Cloth, 2s. 6d.; paper, 1s. 6d.).

Aldred has done a useful piece of work in giving to this valiant fighter for a free press a deserved publicity. There is little of Aldred in the book and lots of Carlile. Certainly a man who served more than nine years in gaol for his opinions deserves to be remembered and can be best allowed to speak for himself.

Following Carlile's heroic lead, some hundred and fifty of his shop assistants and supporters were sentenced to terms of imprisonment varying from four and a half years to three months because they would sell Paine's and other dreaded writings. We owe much to the unbroken spirit of these men and women who, in the official reports quoted by Aldred at length, stand out in splendid contrast to the gross venality of their accusers in that age of "cant and terror."

Henry Hunt and William Cobbett repudiated and denounced Carlile and references to them in this book are not flattering. Carlile described in bitter invective the doings of the "Slaughtermen of Manchester" at

ARE WE GOING TO DESERVE THIS?

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Peterloo and actually called the people to arm themselves against "similar assassins."

Carlile hailed the Free Press as the Messiah of mankind. (Alas that what was once opposed should now be used by our rulers!). He was contemptuous of "the interested gossip" which passes for history and opposed "ancient geography" [not that of Plebs Textbook] because it taught Imperialism.

Aldred's book covers every phase of the life of this intrepid fighter and no student of the age or any teacher should miss it at its modest price.

M. S.

NIETZSCHE

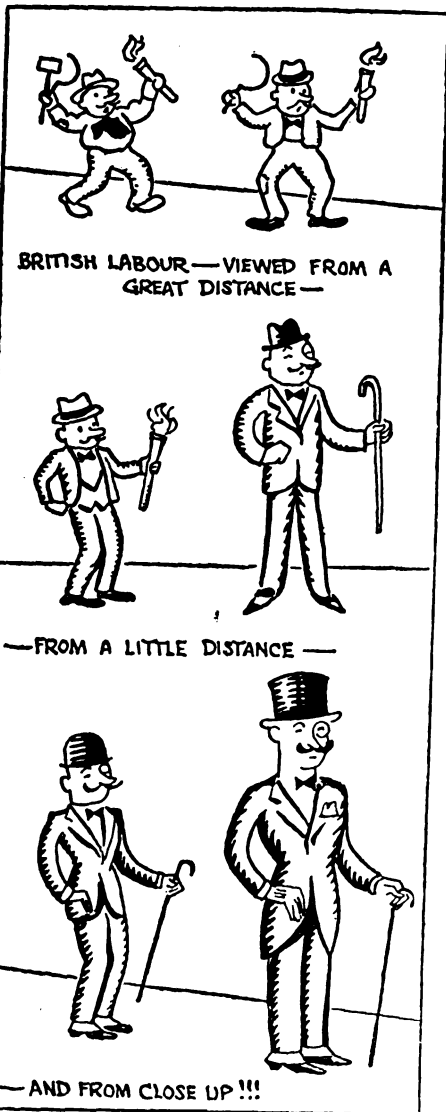
The Philosophy of Nietzsche. By Professor A. Wolf, M.A., D.Lit. (Allen & Unwin, 5s.).

Nietzsche urges "We cannot step outside our own minds and have a peep at things as they are in themselves, in order to compare our previous beliefs with the things themselves. We cannot therefore be really sure that we know reality or any part of it." Does some inquisitive Pleb ask "What are things in themselves?" Dunno! Maybe what remains of the kiss under last year's mistletoe is one! You never can tell.

We are also told that Nietzsche "insisted on the different natural orders of rank and their several moralities." He "regarded the moralities of the lower ranks as stages of development on the way to the higher ideal of the superman. So long as people really belong to the lower ranks of the species they are not fit for the higher ideal. . . . Such people have greater worth by conforming to custom and convention." However, "Whether his is a master mind or no, . . . one, is led to suppose, the individual must decide for himself and take the consequences."

Now, leaving this choice of rank to ourselves should save no end of trouble. The other fellows would be sure to put us in the wrong rank if the choice were left to them. So there is a fair sample of the vintage. Those whose palate is tickled thereby can have a regular carouse for five shillings.

A. P.



The above cartoon is reproduced from an Italian paper. Note the hammer, sickle and torch, in the top picture—fading into more respectable implements—and equipments—lower down.

SECOND CHAMBERS

Second Chambers in Theory and Practice. By H. B. Lees-Smith, M.A., ex M.P. (Allen & Unwin, 7s. 6d.).

Mr. Lees-Smith, who has won golden opinions as an authority on Parliamentary procedure and decorum, has here written a very timely book—more timely, perhaps, than he himself suspected. What with the Unionists' resolve to rescind the Parliament Act, and the Labour Party's approach to power, an obvious necessity arises for all supporters of the Labour Party to face the problem presented by the existence of "our old nobility" and the Hereditary Chamber. In this book they will be able to gain some knowledge of the Second Chambers set up by other democratic and constitutional countries. Special attention is devoted to the British Dominions. Much help, for example, may doubtless be drawn from a consideration of South African Government under General Smuts, the idol of British Liberalism, and of so many of our Labour Party leaders—to say nothing of South African capitalists and reactionaries.

But the first problem of the framers of a new constitution is the motive for setting up a Second Chamber at all. What function can it perform? Our author disposes of its traditional function as a brake on too-rapid legislation in "dangerous" directions. But he believes that there is a place for a Second Chamber—for the examination and revision of Bills. The mode of electing such a Chamber is discussed. Mr. Lees-Smith holds that the election should be by the "Lower House," each Party selecting a number of members proportionate to its own strength. These members need not be drawn from the Lower Chamber, and hence may include men "of legal and technical knowledge and of administrative experience specially suited to a revising assembly."

The book (though not published under Labour Party auspices) provides further evidence of the determination of Labour Party leaders to redeem the Party from any accusation of being unpractical or unconstitutional (except after the most approved constitutional models), and of being a

class Party; and to act at all times with a full sense of their responsibility, not to any section of society, but to "the community as a whole."

T. A.

AN EXCELLENT ATLAS

Philips' Modern School Commercial Atlas. (Geo. Philip & Son, 3s. 6d.).

We have for some time been recommending *Philips' Elementary Atlas of Comparative Geography* as the best cheap general atlas available for worker-students. This new *Commercial Atlas*, just issued by the same publishers, is an exceedingly valuable supplement to the previous volume—and, considering that it is bound in stiff cloth boards, is almost as remarkably cheap. It has thirty-two coloured plates, containing in all sixty-nine maps, illustrating the distribution of raw materials, the various industrial districts of each country or continent, trade routes, etc., etc.

One or two of the maps are decidedly overcrowded; but that is a defect to a great extent unavoidable where a mass of information is compressed into a small space with the object of keeping the cost of the book as low as possible. Another minor fault—which will be the more apparent to the students of our classes since they, for the most part, can only look at atlases in the evening—is that some of the colour used to denote different areas or industries are almost indistinguishable from each other by artificial light; this may lead to warm "demarcation disputes" which will have to be adjourned until daylight for settlement.

But every keen student of economic geography should make an effort to acquire this atlas, which is certainly the best and cheapest *Commercial* one available. (It can be ordered from The PLEBS, postpaid, 3s. 10d.).

J. F. H.

FOR REFERENCE

The People's Year Book (cloth, 3s.; paper, 2s.), is better than previous years in many particulars, one of which is its inclusion of the N.C.L.C. and Plebs addresses. Teachers using Hamilton's Syllabus on The Co-operative Movement will find in the main portion of the book much useful matter.

WAR TIME DIPLOMACY

Austrian Foreign Policy, 1908-1918.

By A. F. Pribram, Professor of History in Vienna University (Allen & Unwin, 4s. 6d.).

This book is based on a study of the archives of the former Austro-Hungarian Government. Few really new facts are presented, and in general there is little that could not have been written up by any well-informed Fleet Street scribe "studying" a glass of beer!

The author's outlook is limited.

In the opening chapter he emphasises the point that "the people had no decisive part in Foreign Policy either directly or indirectly through their representatives in Parliament." He is seemingly unaware that this is likewise the case in "democratic" Britain and France. Let him study the Asquith-Grey Secret Diplomacy of 1906-1916, and also the Franco-Russian Alliance of the pre-war era.

The book exudes an atmosphere of keen desire not to offend the Little Entente and the Entente Allies of Western Europe. The author, in my opinion, exaggerates the separatist tendencies of the Czechs in pre-war days; but as regards the separatist feelings of the Croats in favour of a united "Yugo-Slavia" he is completely astray. The Anti-Serb attitude of the Croats has been amply proved at two General Elections; last March (1923) the anti-Serb Peasant Party led by Stefan Raditch swept the country.

As regards the aged Kaiser Franz and the Hapsburgs, the Professor's attitude is not exactly generous. The reigning Hapsburgs were of course always fully insistent on their "great position," but in many ways they were the most "democratic" ruling House in Europe. Did not Kaiser Franz take a considerable personal share in the granting of Universal Suffrage in 1907?

The volume under notice is written by a Professor who is described as one of the most distinguished historians of the time; if this is so, one is sorry for the others. Even leaving out economic factors, Mr. H. N. Brailsford or Mr. R. W. Postgate would have turned out a real "live" book; Professor Pribram has not. The volume is dear at the price.

A. P. L.

THE "NEW" GEOGRAPHY

World Geography and World Problems.

By J. F. Unstead ("Citizen of the World" Geographies. Sidgwick & Jackson, 4s.).

This is a very good handbook of physical and commercial geography, but its title is a little deceptive. To begin with, it does not deal with the geography of the whole world, since Europe, and the British Isles, are the subjects of other volumes in the same series, and are therefore omitted here. Secondly, the chapter on "World Problems" occupies only a few pages at the end of the book, and though it comes to a sound conclusion—

Co-operation, therefore, and not conflict, is the only real solution of the problems. The study of geography shows that the world is one, and the welfare of mankind demands a similar unity in the co-operation of peoples—

it does not (being intended for use in State schools) get down to grips with the real causes of the international problems of to-day, or point out the actual obstacles to the desired co-operation.

These points apart, it is a well-arranged summary of the main geographical facts about each region of all the continents but Europe, and is, indeed, an excellent example of the new and more intelligent method of geography teaching which does not

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"feature" miscellaneous items of information about the height of mountains or the length of rivers, except in so far as these bear on the development of particular regions and the life of their inhabitants.

J. F. H.

MARK KILLED ONCE MORE

The Labour Theory of Value in Karl Marx. By H. W. B. Joseph (Oxford University Press, 4s. 6d.).

Not satisfied by the previous 999 annihilations of the Labour Theory, a Fellow and Tutor of New College, Oxford, here tries his hand at putting Marx in his place. Let the following quotations suffice to show how he does it:—

H. W. B. Joseph
(p. 15).

"Marx maintained that the value of labour is really to be measured not by the labour required to produce what will maintain the labourer and his family, but by its own amount; so that its proper reward is commodities embodying as much labour as the labourer exerts, and this is more than is embodied in what will barely maintain him and his family."

Marx *Capital* Vol. I. (p. 547).

"What the latter [the labourer] sells is his labour-power. As soon as his labour actually begins, it has already ceased to belong to him; it can therefore no longer be sold by him. Labour is the substance and the immanent measure of value, but *has itself no value.*"

Can you beat it?

The Times Literary Supplement hopes this book will counteract the "propagandist use" of the Labour Theory, "which is very active in this country, particularly through the Labour Colleges." Well, well!

S.

MUNICIPAL

Municipal Trading. By John H. Warren (Labour Publishing Co., 1s.).

Mr. Warren has made a valuable contribution to Local Government

For the Labour Man's
Bookshelf

WHAT TO READ

*A Guide to Books for Worker-
Students*

Carefully prepared and annotated lists of the best books on the subjects of primary importance to workers:—
Economics, History, Geography, Modern Problems, Psychology, Biology, Philosophy, &c., &c.

64 PAGES, 7d.

(postpaid, 8d.)

Per dozen, postpaid, 5s. 6d.

Per 25, 10s. 6d.

literature, far removed from the casual pamphlet. Although his book is thoroughly readable, it is designed rather for the student than for the man in the street, who would have to worry over such words as "surplusage," "expertise," etc., or such statements as: "The advocates of socialisation are not children in the world: they are in some respects children of it: so much so as never to have fallen into the fundamental psychological error that egotism—which they too, recognise as the efficient dynamic—necessarily assumes the form of the acquisition of gain . . ."

The scope of the book includes chapters on Origins and History, Administration (with Statistics), Gains and Profit Making, and a concluding one on development of existing services and new spheres. A book to be carefully read and its information to be imparted when opportunities serve.

M. F. TITTERINGTON.

OUR READERS' VIEWS

DIETZGEN

DEAR COMRADE,—As most Plebeians have to do at least an eight-hours' day before they can find time for study, is it not obvious that the books and magazines they read should be written in especially simple, easy language?

Many of us would like to read a simple, clear exposition of Josef Dietzgen's philosophy. However profound that philosophy may be, it is no use to workers unless it is expressed in simple language which they can understand; for the simple reason that they have not the time to spend years in mastering a special phraseology.

Now where can I find clear explanations of Dietzgen's philosophy?

Kerr's translations of *The Positive Outcome* and the *Philosophical Essays* are written in bad English which I cannot understand, and I am afraid the same is true of W. W. Craik's explanatory letters in *The Plebs*.

For instance, what does a sentence like this mean: "Metaphysical speculation is overcome by the science of metaphysics, which is at the same time anti-metaphysical." For all I know, that sentence may contain the very kernel of Dietzgenism. But I do not understand what it means. That the science of metaphysics is anti-metaphysical may be a true proposition in Dietzgenese, but it is non-sense in common or garden English.

Why does Craik gibe at M. H. D. about his ignorance of Mach and Dietzgen? I should say M. H. D. knows he is ignorant and wants to learn. As Craik understands Mach and Dietzgen, why doesn't he explain their theories to M.H.D.?

Yours fraternally,

J. G. C.

DEAR COMRADE,—My own feeling is that "Dietzgenism," in our I.W.C.E. movement, too often defeats its own aim by becoming an "aim in itself"; and for that reason I am glad that Dobb and Postgate have raised the question of whether the study of Dietzgen is the best possible method of giving

worker-students a training in scientific thinking and the laws of thought.

Most of us are quite ready to agree that this training is desirable. But it is very emphatically open to doubt whether the use of philosophical terminology is either necessary or desirable.

The point is—is there an alternative method? And if so, will someone—Dobb, Postgate, or anyone else—put it forward? Until some such alternative course of training is available, we have, willy-nilly, to stick to "old Josef"—and a lecture course on Dietzgen, with the object of giving ordinary workers a few simple, clear ideas on *How We Think*, always makes me think of using a battleship to open an oyster. (The students often seem to feel like oysters, too!)

Yours fraternally,

Q.

DEAR COMRADE,—R. W. P. wants some comrade to reduce Dietzgen's theory to a few simple notions and compress them if possible into a nutshell. He demands the strength of a cow in an Oxo cube!

The Positive Outcome, embodying as it does the definite achievement of past philosophies, does not lend itself to the successful working of the nut-shell principle. It would be advisable for the student to avoid looking for easy roads to the understanding of Dietzgenian Dialectics. There is no magic key to Dietzgen; he must be studied carefully.

R. W. P. desires to scrap mid-nineteenth century philosophy, *i.e.*, Dietzgenism. Why not carry his illogical logic a step further and scrap mid-nineteenth century economics, *i.e.*, Marxism? The step would not be a wise one, but it would have the saving grace of consistency.

We do not worship authorities now-a-days, still we are generally expected to keep up the pretence of respect. Marx designated Dietzgen the Philosopher of Labour. Lenin found him worthy of mention and highest praise, and in his *Infantile Leftism* proves himself a practical Dietzgenian. The

"N.E.P." is another proof of the dialectical current not quite in keeping with formal Marxist. Lenin also describes Dr. Pannekoek, the Dutch Dietzgenian, as the clearest head in Europe. Those who require something more than the weight of authority should read Fred Casey's book *Thinking*.

A sense of pity steals over one when reading M. H. D.'s hostile opinions of Dietzgen, based on such obvious slender knowledge. Postgate and Dobb have many things in common and their joint ignorance of Dietzgen's method of understanding materialist monism is a sad defect in two otherwise brilliant thinkers.

Fraternally yours,
PATRICK FITZPATRICK.

DEAR EDITOR,—In The PLEBS for May, 1919, Hogben explained how Dietzgen anticipated by a quarter of a century the modern physicists, Ostwald and Mach, and made experience the basis of knowledge and showed how illusory was "the thing in itself." So he apparently saw no contradiction between Mach and Dietzgen. I believe a primer on "scientific method" would be a simpler and better way of acquiring it than a study of Dietzgen's work. However, until then, Dietzgen must serve as a vital part of our studies approached I suggest by way of Casey's *Thinking*.

Yours,
OLD READER.

ELEMENTARY TEXTBOOKS

DEAR EDITOR,—I recently purchased the valuable little book *What to Read*. In the Psychology section, the student is recommended "to start with," to read *Psychology*, by H. J. Watt (People's Books, 1s.) Having very little acquaintance with this subject, and as a "worker-student," I followed the advice given.

After struggling through a maze of "high falutin'" phrases, involved sentences, and a highly academic vocabulary, I came across a sentence which typifies the style of the book very clearly. On page 23 it is stated, "Fechner attempted to deduce from such facts that a geometrical series of differences in stimuli produced an arithmetical series of differences in sensation, or that the sensation differs in proportion to the logarithm of

the stimulus." I wonder how many of your "worker-student" readers are able to comprehend the meaning of this sentence. Not many, I am afraid. That knowledge of Higher Algebra necessary for its complete understanding is not common to the young student of the present day, and certainly does not encourage those who wish to make a detailed study of the subject. If there is to be a second edition of *What to Read* (and I sincerely hope so), will the Plebs Textbook Committee consider the question of placing this book among the more advanced ones? If they do not do so in the interest of the worker-student, then perhaps they will do so with a view to making the study of Psychology a little more popular.

Yours etc.,
BEN DAVIES.

[Our correspondent's remarks on the Psychology textbooks illustrate the difficulties of the task which the compilers of *What to Read* undertook. A small textbook (that is, one that is *cheap*) must *condense* the matter. If it merely "simplifies," and so evades the difficulties inherent in the science, it will not encourage the student to *think*. It is the real subtlety of the Weber-Fechner law that bothers B. Davies—not the algebra at all. Take four bowls of cold water and then add a little boiling water to Nos. 2, 3 and 4 so that you can just feel a difference in temperature—No. 2 warmer than 1. 3 warmer than 2, 4 warmer than 3. Call the sensations that you feel 1, 2, 3 and 4. Then take the temperature of the water in each bowl. These will not be in the ratios 1, 2, 3 and 4, but in other ratios such that 1, 2, 3 and 4 are the logarithms of the temperatures. Now at this point B. Davies gets held up and it is obviously his job to read (in the books recommended in the section on Exact Science) what the logarithm of a number means. In this way his grip on the subject (and on a host of other ones) will become sure and the mental satisfaction of getting the better of a really difficult proposition will be a big reward. Merely reading pap-stuff will never give such a reward.—A MEMBER OF THE TEXTBOOK COMMITTEE.]

ENGLISH—& LATIN

DEAR SIR,—Oh! Butterflies on wheels! How worried A. M. R. is getting about the derivation of the word Education! He suspects me of the sin of playfulness in the matter of this particular derivation, so I hasten to purge myself by turning to the Sacred Books. Smith's smaller Latin Dictionary gives two verbs *Educo*: one primarily a military verb. *E-duco,—xi,—ctum*: To lead or draw out; to bring away; to put to sea; also to draw or drink off; to toss off; to summon; and then: to hatch; rear; bring up; educate (either bodily or mentally), etc.

The other verbis *Educo,—avi,—atum*: To bring up a child physically or mentally; to rear; to educate. Of plants or animals: To nourish, support, produce. (Whence my frivolous reference to *Edo*: I eat!).

My very good reason for preferring the second of these verbs to the first is not only that it gives me the word Education, but also that its primary meaning in Latin connects it with the bringing up of children; whereas the educational aspect of *e-duco* is its last before the *etceteras*. Now have I re-established my reputation for seriousness?

As regards the nine lines devoted to *only*, I have not given a rule, because I do not believe in rules, but I hope that my example (not two as A. M. R. states) brings out the necessity for so placing *only* in the sentence that the words of the sentence "convey the meaning they are obviously in-

tended to convey" and not the absurdity which results from the misplacement of *only*.

If, however, A. M. R. can suggest a better use of these nine lines I shall be only too pleased to consider his suggestion for the reprint of my "English for Home Students" which at the present rate of sale will soon be necessary.

Yours faithfully,

FRANK J. ADKINS.

P.S.—There is a real etymological error in my chapter on grammar if A. M. R. chooses to look for it; but I will not spoil his hunting by being too precise.

A LOST LEADER?

DEAR EDITOR,—In his review of Tom Mann's *Memoirs* in the December PLEBS George Lansbury refers to Mrs. Annie Besant as one "who still keeps the flag of liberty of conscience, freedom of thought, and social justice for all races flying throughout the world."

Mr. Lansbury, is perhaps, unaware that some three years ago Mrs. Besant in one of those "theosopho-Indian" journals with which she is associated, republished, with the added "prestige" of her name the series of scurrilous attacks on labour written by the Duke of Northumberland. It is as well your readers should know this. Mrs. Besant, like Robert Blatchford, is one of the most dangerous enemies of the emancipation of the working class.

Yours fraternally,

F. C. B.

Plebs Executive Committee

1924

The ballot for the seven members of the League Executive resulted as follows:—

	Votes.
J. G. Clancy	148
*M. H. Dobb	214
*Geo. Hicks	246
*J. T. W. Newbold ..	275
A. J. H. Okey	155

*Cedar Paul	218
Eden Paul	208
C. T. Pendrey	175
*R. W. Postgate	257
*Mark Starr	278
A. Vandome	147
*Ellen C. Wilkinson ..	252

Those marked with a * are accordingly elected for the current year.

THE PLEBS

MARKED PASSAGES

Most people mark books as they read them. The passages thus approved of are often of interest to other folks. Send yours along.

"Impartiality"

MRS. GENERAL had no opinions. Her way of forming a mind was to prevent it from forming opinions. She had a little circular set of mental grooves or rails on which she started little trains of other people's opinions, which never overtook one another, and never got anywhere. (Dickens, *Little Dorrit*, Book 2, Chap. II.)

From a Miners' Journal

Of course we get our share of the University Extension lecturing under the Welfare Scheme. "Political Economy" they give us, talks on literature, and in the town of M—— the lecturer is guiding the colliers, trammers and datallers of the place through the intricacies of modern music.

Our own classes, I must confess, are rather poorly attended. An audience of twenty at most assemble in a smaller room within the Free Library. The lecturer is an eager young man from the University of ——, and the current subject "The Development of Parliamentary Institutions in the Nineteenth Century." He has an extraordinary repertoire of gesticulation, flinging his arms around . . . and stabbing the air with a predatory forefinger, even when quoting long excerpts from the many and voluminous books that seem to be part of his lecturing equipment.

The miners sit around with stone-cold eyes. They regard all these antics, this lecture-room posturing and the like, with supreme indifference . . . But a few eager spirits here and there hold to definitely Communistic theories, and these together with an individualistic Single Taxer, and the village humorist, always make question time an occasion of uplifted heart, and merriment of soul. . . .

"It's all book knowledge," said one chap the other night. "I'll bet yon bloke can't make a rabbit hutch."

"'E's none so daft," returned another, "'e gets 'is livin' wi'out workin' an' that's more'n you nor me can do!"

("From a Miner's Journal," by Roger Dataller. *The Adelphi*, January, 1924.)

Unbiased Education in France

He has surprised me, of late, by a new acquirement: a considerable familiarity with Polish history. They only began to teach it quite recently, he says; and thereby hangs a tale. It would seem that an ukase has gone forth from educational headquarters in Paris to the effect that the youth of the entire country is to be brought up in the belief that the Poles, the old friends of France, are a prodigy among nations; every phase of their contemptible politics and degrading parliamentary wrangles during the last few centuries has to be regarded as of epoch-making importance—as opposed to the futile history of their enemies on the East. Nothing, in short, is good enough for Poland; nothing bad enough for Russia. And all because a misguided pack of French capitalists, after those Toulon celebrations, lent their millions to Russia, expecting to receive the usual 300 per cent. profit which is not yet forthcoming, and, let us hope, never will be. An interesting example by what means "patriotic" convictions are nurtured, and for what ends.

(*Together*. By Norman Douglas, 1923.)

Loud and Prolonged Sobs

Here are two or three sample verses from a little ballad published in an American manufacturer's journal:—

*Be loyal to God and your country
To your innermost self be true,
But don't forget there's another debt,
To the Boss be loyal too!*

He has paid for your time and your labours,
You have given your promise to work;

It's up to you to be honest, true,
And it's hardly the square thing to
shirk.

It is easy to knock down the minutes,
To clip off an hour here and there,
And none may know you are doing so,

But ask yourself now, is it fair?

He has taken you on as his servant—
Stenographer, book-keeper, clerk—
He expects from you what you're
paid to do—
To be loyal to him and to work.

The NATIONAL COUNCIL of LABOUR COLLEGES

HEAD OFFICE—22 ELM ROW, EDINBURGH

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

N.F.B.T.O.

MR. COPPOCK, Gen. Sec. of the Nat. Fed. of Building Trades Operatives, has issued a circular to all the branches of his organisation urging them to support the N.C.L.C. movement. Already several have responded, but to get full value out of the circular our Colleges should *at once* take steps to get in touch with the local branches of the Federation and of Unions composing the local Federation. These are :—Amal. Soc. Woodworkers, Amal. U. Building Trade Workers, Nat. Amal. Soc. Operative House and Ship Painters and Decorators, United Op. Plumbers' and Domestic Engineers' Assn., Amal. Slaters' and Tilers' Provident Soc., Nat. Assn. Plasterers, Granolithic and Cement Workers, Nat. Amal. Operative Street Masons' Paviers' and Roadmakers' S., Amal. Soc. Woodcutting Machinists, "Altogether" Builders Labourers and Constructional Workers' Nat. Builders' Labourers' and Constructional Workers' Soc., Nat. U. General Workers, Workers' Union, Building and Monumental Workers' Assn. of Scotland, and Amal. Slaters' Soc. of Scotland.

Amal. Soc. of Woodworkers

We are making considerable progress with this Union. The S.E. Lancs. Dist. Ctee. has an educational scheme with our S.E. Lancs. Area Council; the Bristol Dist. Ctee. has a scheme with the Bristol Labour College; the

Glasgow and West of Scotland Dist. Ctee. has adopted a scheme with the Scottish Labour College, and we hope to hear shortly that other districts have followed suit. What is really wanted, however, is a *national* scheme, and it is good to know that Dist. Ctees. and branches are following the example of the London Dist. Ctee. and asking the E.C. to arrange an Educational Scheme with the N.C.L.C. under which free classes and correspondence tuition will be provided in return for a payment of 3d. or 6d. per member per annum.

Glasgow Trades Council and W.E.A.

A paragraph appeared in the *Daily Herald* recently, which rather suggested that the Glasgow Trades Council was not affiliated to the S.L.C. and that it had decided to affiliate to the W.E.A., thus reversing the decision of the previous year. This was distinctly misleading on both points and a letter was despatched to the *Herald* suggesting that somebody has been "using them." The fact is that the Trades Council is affiliated to the S.L.C., and last year it was affiliated to the W.E.A.; and consequently the decision to continue to be affiliated is no reversal of policy.

N.U.D.A.W.

College Secretaries should note that classes, to be suitable for N.U.D.A.W. members, have to begin later than usual in a number of instances.

Amalgamation of Nat. U. of General Workers, Municipal Employees' Assn. and Nat. Amal. U. of Labour

On Feb. 12th a Conference takes place to settle the terms of amalgamation of the above Unions. Some branches of the M.E.A. are moving an amendment dealing with Independent Working-class Education, and it is very important that N.C.L.C. members of these Unions should take steps to provide for *the right kind* of educational activity on the part of the new amalgamated Union. They must, of course, see that there is no vagueness about their resolution, and the actual insertion of the name N.C.L.C. is desirable.

The Labour Party

When some of our W.E.A. friends get into a tight corner they try to insinuate that the aim of the Labour Colleges is to smash up the Labour Party. They get into so many tight corners that we can sympathise with their difficulty in trying to find a way out. It is worth while bearing in mind, however, that the N.C.L.C. has ten Divisional Organisers and that at the last General Election two of them stood as Labour Candidates, while since then the Scottish Divisional Organiser, though his work won't allow him to agree, has been asked to let his name go forward as a candidate. Three out of ten is not a bad score for the N.C.L.C. And if tutors and active class-workers are included, the score would be considerably higher!

N.C.L.C. Development

It is exceedingly satisfactory to be able to report a rapid increase in the number of Labour Colleges. In organising these, however, comrades will no doubt bear in mind that, as a general rule, it is highly advisable that a College should not be limited to a very small area, e.g., one town, but should cover groups of adjacent towns and villages, connected by transport facilities.

Annual Meeting

The N.C.L.C. Annual Meeting is to take place on Saturday and Sunday, 3rd and 4th May, in Leeds, and all Labour Colleges which have paid

affiliation fees will be entitled to send a delegate; Divisional Councils having the right to send two. Please book this date as we anticipate this will be the *biggest Conference in our history*.

N.C.L.C. DIRECTORY.

Additions and Corrections.

- Div. 3.—*Yarmouth L.C.* Sec., E. Platten, No. 4, Row 36, Howard Street.
 „ *Cambridge L.C.* Sec., W. Morell, 19, Thoday Street.
 „ *St. Albans L.C.* Sec., J. W. Edwards, 98, Albert Street.
 Div. 4.—*Ebbw Vale L.C.* Sec., A. Williams, 85, Mount Pleasant Road, Ebbw Vale, Mon.
 „ *Western Valley L.C.* Sec., R. Wood, 2, Darren Street, Abertillery.
 „ *Aberavon L.C.* Sec., H. Samuel, 49, Elba Avenue, Port Talbot.
 Div. 5.—*Cheltenham L.C.* Sec., R. O. Scrivens, 26, Tennyson Road, St. Marks, Cheltenham.
 „ *Taunton L.C.* Sec., H. Oaten, 64, Wood Street.
 Div. 6.—*Worcester L.C.* Sec., H. Collier, 73, Northwick Road.
 „ *Birmingham L.C.* Sec., D. Gledall, 3, Brockley Place, Elliot Street, Nechells.
 „ *West Bromwich L.C.* Sec., D. Collins, 7, Clive Street.
 „ *Leamington L.C.* Sec., F. G. Cole, 35, Tavistock Street.
 „ *Northampton L.C.* Sec., W. Weston, 8, Currie Road.
 „ *Leicester L.C.* Sec., E. A. Peacock, c/o 146, Coleman Road.
 „ *Wellingborough L.C.* Sec., B. Jennings, 55, Elsdon Road.
 „ *Newcastle, Staffs. L.C.* Sec., W. Bowers, 24, Lawson Terrace.
 „ *Dudley L.C.* Sec., A. V. Lewis, 5, French Road.
 „ *Stafford L.C.* Sec., A. Griffin, 43, Crooked Bridge Road.

- Div. 6.—*Shrewsbury L.C.* Sec., R. Webber, 42, Hill Crescent.
 „ *Wolverhampton L.C.* Sec., J. Parkins, 140, Chester Street.
 „ *Malvern L.C.* Sec., F. E. Rammell, Hill View, The Common.
 Div. 7.—*Sowerby Bridge L.C.* Sec., M. Pickles, 10, George Street, West End, Sowerby Bridge.
 Div. 8.—*Barrow L.C.* Seems to have disappeared!
 „ *Blackburn L.C.* Sec., E. Bowman, 3, Woodville Road.
 „ *Accrington L.C.* Sec., S. Holmes, Lemonius Street.
 Div. 10.—*Perth Local Committee.* Sec., R. Gunn, 2, Brown Street, Perth.
 „ *Fife Local Committee.* Sec., J. F. Mitchell, 33, Queen Anne Street, Dunfermline.

What the Divisions Are Doing

Division 1.—London Council is steadily consolidating its position. G. Phippen is giving a very interesting series of lectures on "Social Evolution." London L.C., 27 classes. Woolwich 3.

Division 2.—It is hoped to get a number of new Colleges going very shortly. Number of classes 15.

Division 3.—16 weekly classes running, and local Colleges, based upon affiliation schemes, being developed.

Division 4.—W. W. Craik lectured in Bridgend on 26th Jan. H. J. Moore (A.U.B.T.W.) and Ted Williams (Miners' Agent) charring. Ogmore Valley Political and Industrial Council has affiliated to the N.C.L.C. New Colleges are being organised in South Wales. See directory.

Division 5.—The Bristol Labour College running successfully, and a new College has been formed at Cheltenham. See directory.

Division 6.—Birmingham Labour College held a Conference with Mark Starr as speaker. With the aid of the Building Trade Workers, Birmingham Trades Council has decided to dissociate itself from the W.E.A. and to support the Birmingham Labour

College. The Midland Organiser of the N.U.C. is urging support of the N.C.L.C. in *The Clerk* (as A. Vandome and others have in the *A.E.U. Journal*.)

Division 7.—47 classes going, of which Leeds Labour College provides 7. Bradford has arranged a series of public lectures. It is hoped to report further Trade Union support next month.

Division 8. Class started at Hapton with backing of local Workingmen's Club. Divisional Council arranging a campaign in Blackburn, Lancaster and Colne. Preston Labour College has opened a new class at Lostock Hall. Liverpool Labour College has won the Blue Ribbon for the number of N.U.D.A.W. students—108. Some branches of the Woodworkers, Weavers, (Preston), and the furnishing trades are paying students' fees.

Division 9. North Eastern Labour College is arranging an Easter weekend School. Divisional Council is taking steps with the assistance of our old friend Bob Holder—who everyone will be delighted to hear is well again—to stir up a movement in Cumberland.

Division 10.—A local Committee of the S.L.C. has been organised in Perth and already it has opened a class. Com. Mitchell, Sec. to the Fife Ctee., is getting things moving in his area. Glasgow and West of Scotland Dist. Ctee. of the A.S.W., which controls fifty-four branches, has arranged an Educational Scheme with the S.L.C. which will provide free access for its members to all the winter classes. This will materially help Glasgow, Ayrshire and Lanarkshire. West Lothian Miners' Union has adopted an Educational Scheme with the Edinburgh District S.L.C. The whole of the Lothian's mine field, both coal and shale, is provided with educational facilities through the schemes of the West Lothian Miners, Shaleminers, and the Mid and East Lothian Miners.

Division 11.—Circulars have been issued inviting Belfast Labour organisations to affiliate to the Belfast Labour College which is in course of formation. All who can assist are urged to get in touch with J. A. Kirk, Secretary of the N.U.D.A.W., 27, Garfield Chambers Royal Avenue.

Labour College (London) Students' Association

AN interesting letter has been received from Comrade Chivers, who is enjoying a scholarship in Germany, giving a very good insight into the terrible condition of affairs in that country. It requires no stretch of imagination to picture the result when a country with a high technical development like Germany collapses. One immediate result is an intensification of the class struggle, and Chivers writes of the changing attitude of the workers towards political groups—"The only people who are active and alive and who really count are the men in the Communist movement." The situation there will have its reflex here in this country.

There is still one of the South Wales ex-students out of employment—Bailey. Possibly the South Wales comrades could bring the matter forward and urge his case.

The Literary and Debating Society has arranged a list of lectures, etc., for this term. "A visit to Russia," by A. Horner, and "Education," by C. P. Dutt, are two items. We have also written some of the Labour M.P.s.

Since the re-opening of the College quite a number of ex-students have looked in. They have expressed themselves in no vague terms regarding the postponement of the Enquiry promised by the two controlling Unions, and have suggested certain proposals to again approach the Executives on the subject. Up to the time of writing no further information, other than the appointment of six representatives to a Committee of Enquiry (reported in *THE PLEBS* two or three months ago), is available. Now that the Election is over there would appear to be no reason for further delay.

A. G. E. (Sec.).

RAILWAYMEN, PLEASE NOTE.

DONCASTER No. 2 Branch of the N.U.R. has nominated Frank Ayres, late member Plebs E.C., and student of the Labour College (London) 1921-23) for one of the vacant Organising Secretaryships of the Union. It is necessary for a candidate to be nominated by ten branches, and nominations have to be in by Feb. 27th. We recommend Com. Ayres' candidature to all N.U.R. Plebs.

The PLEBS Bookshelf

THE *Manchester Guardian* a few weeks ago had an article by Arthur Ransome on "Trotsky as Critic: Literature and Revolution." It appears that that amazingly energetic person, the People's Commissar for War, finds time to take an interest in all sorts of things beside the active business of his office; and recently he has been thinking, and writing, about the revolutionary conception of art and literature in general and about modern Russian literature in particular.

He does not share the impatience towards such matters felt, or affected, by some earnest revolutionists. On

the contrary, he declares that "the complete victory of the new historical principle of Socialism" will only be realised when, in addition to the successful solution of "the elementary problems of nourishment, clothing, warmth, even of primary education," there has also been "a forward move of scientific thought on the part of the whole people and the development of a new art." "In this sense," he goes on, "the development of art is the highest test of the vitality and significance of each epoch."

But although he thus ranges himself very definitely against those militant proletarians who look upon art

and literature as matters of quite inferior importance, Trotsky is equally unsympathetic towards those who, in their simple-minded desire to revolutionise everything as speedily as possible, are endeavouring to encourage the growth of a specifically "proletarian art."

The *contrasting* of bourgeois culture and bourgeois art with proletarian culture and proletarian art is fundamentally erroneous. These latter will never exist at all, since the proletarian regime is temporary and transitional. The historic meaning and moral grandeur of the proletarian revolution lie in the fact that it is laying the foundations *for a non-class, for the first genuinely human culture.*

The new art will indeed differ fundamentally from the old; but it will be a difference lying much deeper than a mere change of subject-matter, or even of attitude towards any temporary, transitional stage of the class-struggle. In Russia to-day, Ransome tells us, "book after book comes from the press almost ostentatiously concerned with the life of the revolution. With all this Trotsky is impatient. . . . He looks for the new art, not in artists' pictures of the revolution, but in the work of artists whose *way of looking at life in general* has been dictated by the revolution."

* * *

I found this account of Trotsky's excursions into literary criticism all the more interesting because, wanting to write something here about the new half-crown edition of Anatole France's works which Messrs. John Lane are now issuing, I had been trying to get clear in my own mind just *why* one should want to urge one's comrades to lose no time in getting acquainted—or getting better acquainted—with Anatole France. After all, Anatole France does not write "Socialist" books—"Socialist," that is, in the sense of being, primarily and definitely, attacks on capitalism and capitalist society, or on particular evils resulting therefrom. He does not, for the most part, write books describing actual revolutions; and even when he does so, as in *The Gods are Athirst*, his unflattering portraits of revolutionaries cause some solemn folk to accuse him

of being a reactionary. He has not, like H. G. Wells, a passion for drawing Utopias—for one can scarcely describe the last few pages of *Penguin Island* as an essay in Utopia-building. Nor does he, even to the extent of such a writer as Dickens, write about the life of the "common" people.

I look at the Anatole France volumes on my own shelves and, thinking only of their subject-matter, realise that they are a curious little lot to recommend to class-conscious proletarians: *The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard*, a somewhat sentimental story about an old gentleman devoted to books, cats, and his young and beautiful ward; *The Red Lily*, a love story about some rather overpoweringly cultured people, with too many wearisome digressions on literature and aesthetics; *Penguin Island*, a satirical "history" of a certain State, the latter half of which it is decidedly difficult to see the point of unless one is fairly familiar with the details of French political history during the last half-century; *The Revolt of the Angels*, a tale of modern Parisian life interwoven with a fantasy about rebel angels who, tired of the monotony of endless Sabbaths in Paradise, come down to earth in order to taste of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge; *At the Sign of The Reine Pedauque*, a rambling story of seventeenth century Paris, centring round the person of a drunken, wench-loving, scoundrelly old priest, and including some exceedingly unedifying incidents; *Mother of Pearl*, a collection of short stories on miscellaneous subjects—Pontius Pilate, a mediæval juggler, the Revolutionists of 1792, a nineteenth century Bohemian poet, etc., etc. . . . Truly, a strange miscellany to set before a worker-student of industrial Britain!

* * *

But—as Trotsky insists—the important thing about an artist is not the subject-matter of his works, but his *way of looking at life in general*. And Anatole France's way of looking at life is that of a man who sees very clearly indeed that all life is change; that "nothing is, everything is becoming"; that current standards and ideals of every kind, so far from being eternal or unalterable verities, are almost ludicrously little half-truths—

all of which it is decidedly stimulating for wage-slaves to realise (and to keep on realising afresh). His way of looking at life, too, is in one tremendously important respect that of an artist who, intellectually at any rate, is already a citizen of the class-less society of the future. To Anatole France, emphatically, all men are equal. He sees Crainquebille, the coster, Pilate, the Emperor's deputy, Catharine Fontaine the saint, Catharine the lace-maker and light-o'-love, as human beings—all alike lovable, weak, "sinful," generous, mean, heroic, cowardly—whether they cover their bodies with ermine or corduroy, silk or sack-ing. He does not alter his tone by the smallest shade when he turns from millionaire to beggar, from saint to scoundrel, from intellectual to illiterate. He may write little or nothing about Socialist ways and means and methods. But decidedly his *way of looking at life* is that of the complete Socialist. Think of all the various kinds of snobbery which result from idealising this or that type, or class, or race, and of how prone most of us are to snobberies of one sort or another; and you will realise to what an amazing extent Anatole France is "a man of the future."

Let me quote another sentence from Trotsky's description of what, in his view, will be the chief characteristics of the art of the future:—

This art will need a new outlook. It will be irreconcilable, first of all, with *mysticism, either open or disguised as romanticism*, for the revolution

starts from the central idea that the sole master should be collective man, and that the limits of his power are to be defined only by knowledge of natural forces and ability to utilise them. . . .

That, also, is assuredly part of Anatole France's way of looking at life. Romanticism and mysticism and religion are to him interesting only as examples of the means invented by that incorrigibly inventive animal, Man, to veil from his eyes the facts he does not wish to see or, seeing, cannot yet understand; they are part of the works of Man—Man still blundering in infantile ignorance, yet showing in flashes the greatness of the power that is to grow in him.

Is it perhaps desirable to add that one can seldom "get hold" of this biggest thing a writer has to give us—his way of looking at life—from a single one of his books. Certainly one cannot do so in the case of Anatole France. Which is the best, or most characteristic, of his books to begin on I don't know. Not *The Red Lily*, or *Thais*, or *Jocasta*, perhaps. But if you are wise you will certainly go on, from whatever volume you may pick up first, to read as many of his books as you can find time for. And this new half-crown edition, which already includes ten or twelve volumes, is excellent value—good type, white paper, and handsome binding. The wise Pleb will get as many as he can afford for his own bookshelf.

J. F. H.

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Write—J. P. M. MILLAR, *General Secretary*, N.C.L.C., 22 Elm Row, EDINBURGH

THE N.C.L.C.

The N.C.L.C. is the National Council of Labour Colleges, the central organisation of the Labour College Movement. It is composed of the Labour College, London, the Scottish Labour College, 51 non-residential local Labour Colleges, the Plebs League, the Amal. Union of Building Trade Workers, the Distributive Workers, and the Nat. Fed. of Building Trade Operatives.

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