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ELECTORAL LESSONS

THE General Election in this country and the Presidential Election in U.S.A. have both resulted in a triumph for reaction. Across the Atlantic J. P. Morgan and Co. and the Trusts have placed their nominees for a further period in the saddle. Here the financial interests of the City of London and the Conservative sections of British industry have retaken the reins of Government, and hold them more securely than before. The government of Britain, in face of apparent stabilisation in Europe, can once again turn its hands to the strengthening of the British Empire and the affirmation of British interests. British capitalism is now safe for five years to "dig itself in" against the rising force of the workers by a period of "sound" government. (Has not Sir Robert Horne already dropped a hint of probable attacks on the legal position of Trade Unions?)

But although on the face of it the events of the last two months may seem to have been a victory for capitalist reconstruction, they have at the same time contributed something of undoubted value to the workers. And this contribution chiefly takes the form of certain political lessons. First, the election brought the class issue of politics more nakedly into the open than ever before. It was fought on a class issue ; people voted on class lines ; our opponents dropped their Parliamentary politeness and adopted a snarl instead. This clearing of the issues is all to the good. It drives home with the logic of events what our education for so many years has tried to show. Second, the episode of the Zinovieff letter provided as graphic an illustration as one could desire of the theory of the State on which our teaching has been based—that the State is a class State, which (in the words of G.B.S.) Reformist leaders “ can no more make produce Socialism than they can make a sewing machine produce fried eggs.” It shows, as the late E. D. Morel expressed it in *Forward*, to what an extent a State department like the Foreign Office, with its capitalist personnel, “ its mysterious links with the Secret Service, the newspapers and ‘ Society ’ . . . is a menace to Democratic Government.” In other words it has blatantly shown the so-called “ Democratic ” State as a *Class State*. Third, the events of the last few days before the poll displayed the danger in a moment of crisis of possessing leaders who think more of preserving the integrity of British Imperialism and the traditions of the class State—the sacred tradition of ministerial responsibility for the acts of reactionary subordinates—than of fighting the battle of the working class. The election, therefore, has abundantly shown the correctness of the social interpretation which we have declared to be true, and the wrongness of the democratic political theorising of our W. E. A. opponents, who in their zeal for academic impartiality have turned a blind eye to these significant facts.

But in addition to the delight of underlining the lesson of these events, there is something of considerable importance to which our attention will have to be devoted before very long. Hitherto in the history of the Labour movement a set-back introducing a period of reaction has resulted as a rule in a considerable amount of confusion, both moral and intellectual, in the workers' ranks. At the present juncture a similar tendency to confusion seems not unlikely. At such times many are even found to excuse this confusion under the caption of a necessary tactical defeat. But the confusion, if it is allowed to garner its harvest, merely accumulates obstruction to trip the step of some future forward advance. So

The Lessons of the Election

To Avoid Intellectual Confusion

the failure of Owenism brought disillusionment and confusion, and the strength of Chartism was sapped by the uncertainty and conflict to which this confusion gave rise. So, in turn, did the collapse of Chartism pave the way for those dangerous half-truths on which the Old Unionism was built.

It will not be surprising, therefore, if the present period of reaction evokes a recrudescence among many militant workers of an anti-political tendency, finding expression in complete absorption in industrial action and industrial machinery. This tendency is in evidence even in Edo Fimmen's excellent little book. In contrast to this, the Reformists are likely to raise the cry—as the editor of the *Daily Herald* has already shown signs of doing—that the vote is the only and sufficient instrument to secure the emancipation of the workers. New intellectual fads, such as a bourgeois pacifism and internationalism or a new national socialism, may seek to surround us with the confusion of honeyed words. But all such issues will be causes of confusion in the workers' ranks precisely because they are unreal ones. The real issue is the class struggle—the struggle for power. This is not an issue of industrial *v.* political action, for in so far as the problem of power involves the State it must be a political problem, and in so far as it is a struggle it cannot be subservient to traditional democratic *clichés*. This struggle will need to subordinate all sectional offensives to the needs of the struggle as a whole. Our duty, therefore, will be to emphasise this real issue and to explain in the light of historical comparisons the implications to which it gives rise. If we can do this we shall do much to keep the Labour movement free of confusions and to ensure that the next forward advance when it comes is guided by a sense of strategy which has gleaned something from experience in the past. Is not the essence of education to dissipate intellectual confusion?

But the election has given us yet another illustration of the social interpretation which we have taught. It has shown that in those areas where the workers are already best organised on independent class lines Labour is politically strongest and the workers most impervious to the cleverly devised propaganda of the capitalist press.

*The Fact the
Father to the
Thought*

It is not sweet persuasion but the logic of facts and of class circumstances that is Labour's best ally. Where the workers are organised for struggle and are brought face to face with the class issue in their everyday lives—strikes, Poplarism, anti-eviction struggles—there they are most ripe to comprehend the essence of internationalism and are least fallow for the "red bogeys" thrust at them by those of the top-hat and the fur coat. Organise the workers for struggle, and their political consciousness and their desire for education follow. Hush and deny the struggle

and their politics become those of the *Daily Mail* and their education, if any, that of the self-seeker and the intellectual miser. The gist of our education, therefore, needs to be that the best educator of all is the struggle itself. And that is where our culture differs from the cloistered culture of the past !

It follows that whenever two or three Plebs are gathered together in the name of workers' education, two things should be earnestly pondered and discussed. First, how far can our studies throw light on the best method of widening the range of working-class consciousness ? How can the extension of the class organisations of the workers to areas hitherto poorly developed be devised to this end ? Could it be done by Trades Councils sending missionaries into villages and the backward areas of towns, missionaries who will not merely preach a gospel from the housetops, but will establish Trades Councils or similar organisations there, to be in the end more effective means of persuasion ? Individual Plebeians and N.C.L.C. classes can play an important part in such necessary work. Second, in what ways can our education help to make the real issues of the present situation clearer to the workers ? How can it best go to meet those elements of confusion which seem likely to arise ? For, in so far as we can find answers to questions like these, we shall cease to be mere students of the history of the past and become in some small part makers of history of the future ; and it is the combination of these two elements which is the soul of true Marxism.

TOWARDS a TRADE UNION YOUTH MOVEMENT

We usually leave the provision of technical education to the educational institutions of the employer. But in these days of Direct Labour and Guilds we are faced with the immediate need for men who not only understand the social position of the workers, but also have the technical knowledge to organise and supervise the job. Our contributor suggests a blend of the two kinds of education and the formation of special Youth Sections.

THE possibilities of a Youth Movement in Great Britain are great, and we are wasting a lot of energy on material for educational work, but are not getting the desired results. Hence, we should devote more time to the structure of the Youth Movement in this country. Boys entering industry from our schools are not taught their duty to their class, and no trade union

has yet tackled this all-important problem. The organisation of a Youth Movement here is definitely someone's duty, and the time devoted to it would prepare our movement for a much greater advance than heretofore. On the Continent the Unions definitely cater for the apprentices. They do not wait until they are journeymen and then start to educate them in economic problems. I have had the pleasure of coming into contact with the Youth Movement of the German Building Trades Unions, and have discussed with many of my British and European colleagues the adoption in this country of a similar organisation.

At the moment we are attempting to impose our views of the Social State on men whose ideas are somewhat set, with the result that we get very slow results. The present methods of dealing with apprentices adopted by the British Trade Unions are not conducive to progress. Boys and girls who have entered industry are not told that it is their duty to join their respective trade unions, and it will be quite true to say that a very small percentage of the youth in industry is organised. If, however, a youth does join his or her union during the apprenticeship period, how does the movement deal with him? Is there a plan of action? We all know that no system obtains under which the youth can take part in their own affairs. They become members of an ordinary branch of their trade union and, in consequence of the fact that men's affairs are mainly discussed, they are unable to take part. Nothing attractive or of interest turns up to give them food for thought. The possibilities of their entering into debate on industrial questions of moment are as remote as the millenium. If to these disadvantages the general lack of toleration extended by journeymen to apprentices is added, the result would be almost to break the courage of the most spirited youth. The question, therefore, should be tackled from another angle.

Apprentices should be enlisted into the trade union movement as soon as they enter industry, and apprenticeship branches should be established, officered by their own Youth Secretary and President. These branches should be made the centre of interest of the union, and a definite educational system should be laid down, the branches being taken as the nucleus for classes on industrial history, geography and economics, etc.

It would also be necessary to set up an additional department in the head offices of each union under the heading of "Youth Section," and the person in charge should make it his or her study to organise the educational scheme from time to time as required. This undoubtedly would lend itself to the growth of a greater and more active membership as the years passed by, for the youths so trained would be an asset to any trade union, because they would

at least be acquainted with the structure of their own union as well as with that of society.

It becomes more and more apparent to any thinker in the Trade Union Movement that our policy must be constantly changing, and to adapt our minds and the minds of our trade union comrades to changing circumstances, it is necessary that the apprentice should have an industrial and economic training, seeing that the National Education system says that the technical education of youth is vital. We, at the moment, start too late with our working-class education. Here, however, is the possibility of a movement that within a generation may quite change the outlook of our movement. Our progress must be ever forward, and this is the most fruitful field for working-class education of which I can conceive.

An opportunity for the development of the movement presents itself to the Building Trades, and should be taken hold of at once. The Joint Report on House Building presented to Parliament in April, 1924, provides that all additional young labour brought into the industry should join the appropriate unions. This gives us a nucleus for the commencement of a real youth movement in this country. However, to tackle this question with real determination requires some courage, for it would be folly even to organise the boys in their respective craft unions, in consequence of the fact that all the crafts in building trades work together on the jobs. A much better plan, however, would be to organise the youths through the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives, and establish a central branch of all crafts in every town and village. By so doing a better spirit would be created. The craft idea would be subordinated to the industrial idea; the unit of operation would be more plastic and its educational potentiality would be greater. This, of course, needs courage; but it is believed that the unions connected with the industry would see the great utility of the scheme, and would not be slow to adapt themselves to the opportunity presented.

If our movement has to grow and take over industry, then we must train the young mind in the channels likely to be of the greatest advantage to society, instead of simply saying that there are too many difficulties or that it cannot be done. I believe it *can* be done, we have sufficient capacity in our movement for it and, what is more, it *must* be done, if we want to control the destinies of our country from a labour standpoint. The world belongs to youth, and we must see our youths grow up in the understanding of our movement during their period of apprenticeship.

R. COPPOCK
(Gen. Secty., N.F.B.T.O.).

THE RECENT ELECTIONS

A FEW days ago a witty communist commented upon the recent General Election by remarking that the propertied interests had "forged" their way to power. We might, indeed, expand the illustration by stating that they had to forge a tale in order to forge ahead.

Seriously, however, the events surrounding the General Election should be carefully studied by every Marxian in this country. This is all the more necessary because there is a tendency to imagine that future political struggles in Britain will be conducted along lines in keeping with our "racial genius" and according to our "inherent national characteristics." We have leaders in the Labour movement who contend that we, in this country, need not study the tragic consequences of the class struggle in other lands, because, being "British," we have nothing to learn from either foreigners or people with an "Asiatic" mind. These Labour leaders who refuse to believe that political conflicts in other lands can teach them anything are very well known. Their most conspicuous trait is an invulnerable ignorance regarding the most pronounced effects at present taking place in the class struggle at home. Whereas the reactionary Bourbons could learn nothing and forget nothing, many modern Labour leaders, confronted face to face with the most obvious facts, can neither see, hear, nor feel anything. They seem to be oblivious of everything—except their careers.

What were the three things that came to the front in the recent election? The Campbell case, the Russian Treaty and the forged Zinovieff letter. Each of these items was directly related, in various ways, to the class struggle. The election results showed that where a Labour candidate did explain the real significance of the three issues put forward by the propertied interests, it was there that the masses stood most solid against the press hurricane of fabrication. This is easy to understand. Where a candidate uses an election to agitate against capitalism, and to mobilise the workers to struggle against the system, he is mentally preparing them to anticipate and to withstand any sharp offensive on the part of the enemy.

The Campbell case enabled every Labour candidate to show how correctly the Marxians had defined the rôle of armed force in its relation to the State. While many Labour simpletons imagined that the army was above politics, the Campbell case instantly reminded one of Bismarck's declaration, in 1892, *that the Socialist question was*

in the last resort a military question! In these days when the industrial demands of the workers become important political issues, it only needed an appeal to the soldiers along the lines of the *Workers' Weekly* article, to bring out the essentially political importance of the armed forces. Such an appeal at once revealed two things. Firstly, it showed what value those who "detest" the class struggle place upon the peaceful operation of democratic institutions. Secondly, it demonstrated the determination of the "democratically-minded" propertied interests to guard jealously their armed dictatorship over the masses.

Why was Soviet Russia implicated in the Red "plot"? Why did our reactionaries not attempt to fasten a plot upon America, Italy, or Germany? They knew that the *one* country that the Labour Premier would willingly and enthusiastically assail was Russia. The British ruling class enhances its power because of its diabolical cunning in exploiting the anti-socialist bias and prejudices of the moderate Labour movement. While the masses of Britain have given good service to Soviet Russia, the most prominent moderate Labour leaders have attacked it most bitterly. These attacks have gone on for several years and have been most brilliantly utilised by the capitalist class against the British Labour movement. The venom of the anti-Soviet speeches against Russia, delivered by the Right Wing leaders, was an essential condition for the success of the Red "plot." We can see, therefore, why Russia was used as a bogey just as Germany might have been used during 1914—18.

But why of all men in Russia was Zinovieff chosen as the individual to play the principal part in the "plot"? He was fixed upon not because of his connection with the Soviet government, but because he is the head of the international Communist party. The Right Wing leaders of the Labour party began the election by staging a terrific onslaught upon the communists at the Labour Party Conference. They had explained to the country that revolutionary action involved conspiracies, etc. They, therefore, performed the highly important and preparatory work for the successful launching of a Red plot. All that the propertied interests did was to exploit the psychological situation so carefully created by the Right Wing leaders, and to use it against the Labour party. There was one weak point in the whole scheme, and that was the doubtful attitude of the Labour Premier towards the faked Zinovieff letter. Would he use it as a boomerang? Would he expose the traditional and reactionary policy of the Foreign Office bureaucracy? Would he completely turn the tables upon them by denouncing and showing up the journalistic sewers of the capitalist press? Or would he be driven in his over-weening bias against the communists

to use the faked letter as an authentic document in order to strike at the Left Wing, and to aim a blow at the Soviet government? Unfortunately for the whole Labour movement Mr. MacDonald fell into the trap so carefully prepared for him by the reactionaries.

Any serious student of the working-class movement might have foreseen that clever capitalist politicians would endeavour to work up some stampede. The thing was so obvious that in Rusholme we warned the workers in our leaflets, from the beginning of the election, to look out for some sensational stunt towards the end of the campaign. Even the *Manchester Guardian* commented upon this fact. In a speech one week before the event we were able to anticipate matters to the extent of showing that the capitalists might seek to throw a bombshell into the Labour camp, and to use the hand of some distinguished Labour leader to throw it! No prophetic soul was needed to see what was coming. The situation created by the Right Wing leaders made a Red scare almost inevitable.

The recent General Election showed what the capitalist class are prepared to do when a slight gesture of opposition is made against them. They will fight with a continually growing desperation against Labour in the measure that a real opposition against them grows and develops. The weapons of abuse will be replaced by others more cruel and brutal. The elements that sent Black and Tans into Ireland have nothing to learn from simpletons like Mussolini. The group at present in power are closely connected with those who talked light-heartedly about civil war during 1912—14. But their most sinister gift is that which enables them to use the leaders of the Right Wing in the Labour movement against the more courageous fighters of the Left. Unfortunately, the mild parliamentary Labourites are unable to see that big and cruel battles are being organised. This was most vividly seen in the attitude adopted by those moderate candidates who failed to hold their seats at the recent election. They resented their defeat as something akin to a personal insult. Instead of viewing their defeat as a casualty in a struggle—a class struggle—they posed as victims cheated in a game—a purely party game. They complained that the other side had departed from the rules of the parliamentary party game and had behaved in a most unfair and ungentlemanly manner.

The Labour College must get down to its work with renewed vigour. It must show the growing intensity of the class struggle with the increasing collapse of capitalism. And, considering all that happened at the recent election, when realising, too, that the majority of the Labour candidates seemed afraid to use the parliamentary struggle to mobilise the workers for a real conflict

against capitalism, it might be a good thing to study the question whether democracy is democratic. This would lead to the bigger question, raised last month in *The PLEBS*, whether the study of Marxism does not now include an examination into the tactics of the class struggle embraced under the title of Leninism. Such a study would tend to bring our class work away from the realm of abstraction and to root it in the reality of present concrete affairs.

WM. PAUL.

TWO PROBLEMS OF THE WORKING-CLASS

TWO new booklets of great importance have been added to *The PLEBS* Sixpenny Series, namely, *Fascism, Its History and Significance*, by L. W., and *The Co-operative Movement*, by John Hamilton, the able Chairman of the N.C.L.C. Both should be read at once by every worker as an earnest of his intention to apply his general principles to the solution of particular, concrete problems as they arise. We dare not hang up the sword of our Marxist analysis; we must use it every day if we are to keep it bright. Two kinds of problems confront us: those that arise in the body of our own movement, and those that are thrust upon us from the side of our enemies. In the Co-operative Movement and in Fascism we have an example of each. What do they mean? How have they grown? What is the attitude we should adopt towards them?

Even more necessary than to recognise a problem when we are right up against it is to *anticipate* it and forestall the manoeuvres of our enemies. That is the lesson of Fascism in Italy, and that is what makes so urgent the comparative study of the working-class movement as an international stream. L. W.'s chapters have already appeared in *The PLEBS*, and should have a quick and big circulation in this more convenient form. The merit of his analysis is its clearness and simplicity; he never allows his complex material to hinder the expression of his definite point of view. It comes, too, very opportunely. Fascism in Italy is visibly tottering to its fall, its hold over the nationalist minds of big sections of the workers has failed, as the results of Fascist tyranny become apparent. No more naked and arrogant class despotism has ever existed.

Hamilton's is the first real study that has been made of the Co-operative Movement from a definitely socialist angle, the historical chapters in particular being extremely good. Is this great, blind,

untheoretical body of working-class collectivism capable of becoming a third partner to the trade unions and the socialist parties? The experience of co-operators and their employes shows that shareholders can exercise no real democratic control (say) over the directors of the C.W.S., and that mere consumers' collectivism is no guarantee of workers' freedom. These facts must weigh with us when we come to hammer out the shape of our new socialist society. Hamilton makes these and numerous other points admirably, and has written an invaluable book. (There are two misprints, by the way, "emigration" for "immigration" on page 9, and "£5,000,000" for "£5,000,000,000" on page 37.) That we can produce such work as this proves that we are a real, live, healthy educational movement. We like this sixpenny series, and are greedy for more.

J. L. GRAY.

THE FLOWING TIDE

The nature of our science is determined by the nature of our general outlook.

THIS New Psychology dictum (it is culled from pp. 105 and 106 of Fritz Wittels' *Sigmund Freud*) might have been penned expressly as a motto for the Plebs League and the National Council of Labour Colleges. Otherwise worded, it is the guiding principle of J. F. and Winifred Horrabin's brilliant little shilling manual, *Working-Class Education*, just issued by the Labour Publishing Company. The point is so vital to our movement, and is so admirably made by the Horrabins, that we do not hesitate to quote most of their preamble (pp. 9 and 10).

"Two different schools of working-class educationalists mean two quite different things when they speak of 'working-class education.'

"One school means the *extension* of the benefits of culture, in the general sense of the term, to the class which, by reason of its lack of means and leisure, has been debarred from a full share of these benefits hitherto. . . . Culture . . . is . . . the common heritage; . . . and the social and economic factors which have cut off the workers from their proper part in that heritage are . . . accidental and irrelevant. . . . This school regards culture as something altogether apart from, and unaffected by, the class division of society.

"The other school means by 'working-class education' a particular *kind* of education, aiming primarily at meeting the specific needs of the workers as a class, and undertaken by the workers themselves *independently* of, and even in opposition to, the ordinary existing educational channels. This second school takes the view that all human culture, past and present, has been coloured by the outlook and prejudices of successive ruling (i.e., leisured) classes; and that the working class . . . will not merely add to that culture a new 'note' of its own, but will inevitably re-value all culture by the standards of its own ideals and purposes.

"The first group may be said, in brief, to regard Education (with a capital E) as good in itself; the second, to place the emphasis on the Working Class."

Could there be a better exemplification of the motto that the nature of our science is determined by the nature of our general outlook? This principle guides the authors throughout all the chapters: The Pioneers, 1789—1848; The Philanthropists, 1848—1908; the Proletarians, 1908—1924; The Present-Day Position; The Aims and Methods of Working-Class Education. In every one of these chapters we are shown by documentary proof how the difference between the educational science of the "extensionists" (the champions of the University Extension Movement, Ruskin College, and the W.E.A.), and that of the "independents" is determined by the difference in their respective outlooks upon this matter. The former are looking at an abstract Culture; the latter looking at a concrete phenomenon, the modern Working Class. The former really aim at diffusing among the less favoured members of the nation [!] a modicum of "liberal education"—of that training which, in their heart of hearts, they believe only to be "appropriate for a freeman, who is supported by slaves and who has before him a life of leisure." The latter (page 72) "aim at making *conscious* that social ideal which, though implicit in every form of working-class organisation, is still but dimly realised by millions of workers."

Our brief tribute to a brilliant booklet which all Plebs and all N.C.L.C. students will read is entitled "the flowing tide." The reason for that title will be obvious to everyone who has inside knowledge of the movement. Plenty more reasons can be found in the Horrabin's book. Here is yet another reason! In the last (not only the *latest* but the *last*) issue of *New Standards*, edited by G. D. H. and Margaret Cole, the man whose genius has for several years been largely devoted to the support of the tottering footsteps of the W.E.A. and its various aliases, practically gives up the game. He thinks, indeed (page 356), that the W.E.A. and the N.C.L.C. "will learn to work together"; but in his "Students' Corner"

(pp. 375 to 377) he goes as far as can reasonably be expected to admit that they will only work together after the manner in which the lamb lays down with the lion.—“Yes, sir, but the lamb was *inside* the lion.”—The W.E.A. students are to “storm the fort,” and are to insist upon receiving not “extensionism” but I.W.C.E. ! (What will happen in that case to the sinews of war, subscribed by liberal-minded boorjwaw class-collaborationists of the Mansbridge-cum-Tawney persuasion, this deponent sayeth not !)

Why did *New Standards* die with its October issue, with its twelfth number, in the last month of its infancy? Partly because, like the trick rider in the circus, it was trying to straddle three horses at once, and the horses would not run happily side by side. It claimed to advocate new standards in *industry, politics and education*. New standards in industry and politics, yes; but its standards in education were, like those of all “extensionists,” antediluvian. Father Noah’s flood happened quite a while since, and W.E.A. or W.E.T.U.C. standards have been left high on Mount Ararat. The workers have, indeed, a “new standard.” They are re-valuing all culture by the standards of their own ideals and purposes. In education, no less than in industry and politics, their touchstone is the fact of the class struggle. That is the supreme lesson of the Horrabin’s book.

EDEN AND CEDAR PAUL.

The END of an EXPERIMENT

SO much good water-power has flowed under the bridges since the autumn of 1923 that it is difficult for us to throw our minds back to that period. But the effort is necessary, for the autumn of 1923 is the standard by which we have to judge the facts—and fancies—of the last twelve months. It represents the normal dull level of capitalism in a crisis of stagnation, from which the pale pink froth of more recent episodes must not distract our attention.

It is important because in 1923 the realities of the economic situation were more evident and more widely realised than they have been since. Before the Protection crusade was launched, and while the debate on inflation was growing in bitterness, there was a period of political uncertainty in which a steady growth of the desire to do *something*—no matter what—to release industry and trade from their depression was obvious.

The *Westminster Bank Review* estimated that production as a whole during 1923 was only 88 per cent. of 1913. (When considering any such figure, it must be remembered that in many basic industries productive capacity greatly increased during the war).

If in a few months' time the *Westminster Bank Review* estimates production as a whole during 1924, it will almost certainly show it as somewhere between 86 per cent. and 90 per cent. of 1913. The number of unemployed in September, 1923, was 1,354,750, a figure which, with due allowance for those working short time, means that some 10 per cent. to 12 per cent. of the available labour-power of the nation was lying rusting. This figure corresponds fairly well with a level of production 12 per cent. below the 1913 standard. (Unemployment in September, 1924, was 1,163,600.)

In 1923 imports were (in volume) 89 per cent. of 1913, re-exports 70 per cent., and exports of British goods 69 per cent. (Figures are not available for imports and exports in 1924.) One more illustration of my point: the pound sterling, on September 22nd, 1923, was worth 4.54 dollars. On September 22nd, 1924, it was worth 4.46 dollars.

That was the position in 1923—under production, depression and inability to reach the gold standard. *The same position rules to-day.*

The things they had to face were not only conditions of depression at home, although it was those conditions that provided the main spur to action. They feared a revolution in Germany; they feared a Franco-German industrial combination; they were conscious all the time of the threat of America to throw her financial weight into the scales on the side of France and against Britain. Something had to be done about it. . . .

Some said, "Try a dose of inflation." Others, "Withdraw from Europe and re-organise the Empire as an economic unit." But those who won in the elections of 1923 were those who said, "Accept America's terms, settle Europe, and open the Russian market."

The only link between Lloyd George and Mr. Wheatley, as elements of an electoral majority and later of a governing "bloc," was that of agreement on the stabilisation of Europe. But even while that stabilisation was being carried through, doubts began to rise in the minds of large sections of the British industrialists as to its likely effects. Many industrialists saw ahead of them not new markets but new competition; and this was perhaps the basis for the Liberal Party's entirely unscrupulous repudiation of the Dawes Plan during the 1924 elections, when they flooded the South Wales valleys with leaflets showing how stabilising Germany and perpetuating reparation coal deliveries was hitting the British coal industry. It would be a mistake to treat the vigorous campaign against the Dawes Plan carried on by the *Daily Mail* and its associates before and during the elections as a piece of political irresponsibility. The interests of all small industrialists,

of the traders and shopkeepers catering for the home market, and of investors whose money is locked up in home industries are against the Dawes Plan.

On November 9th Sir Robert Horne issued a manifesto in the *Sunday Express* warning British industry against the effects of the Dawes Plan, and calling for Protection by some less clumsy weapon than the Safeguarding of Industries Act. This movement is at present confined to those outside the Cabinet, for the good reason that "it does not do" as yet for responsible politicians to come out against stabilisation openly.

We now have the situation where the German nationalists opposed to the Dawes Plan are actually taking heart from Baldwin's accession to power. Herriot labours in considerable difficulties, and if Baldwin refuses to ratify the League of Nations protocol, the political conditions necessary for Herriot's government will have gone. The concessions which on all sides were considered necessary to find agreement on some "way out" of the morass of 1923—England to avoid the conditions of crisis which we have already mentioned, France to avoid a collapse of the franc—have now achieved all that they can do. The high-water mark of capitalist internationalism has for the moment been reached. Now again each national group looks to the interests of its own national capitalism; and as a result, undeclared and hidden, the Anglo-French conflict will inevitably re-appear. For the policy of the party that has come to power (under the phrases and the politeness of Mr. Chamberlain) must necessarily be a policy of a free hand for British industry and insular finance in Europe.

The workers have not appeared yet in this analysis. Their pressure was one of the factors that induced British capitalism to try the great experiment of a MacDonal—Haldane—Snowden government. There was a very definite hope, which only faded gradually, that a Labour Government could introduce peaceful co-operation into industry; i.e., keep the worker quiet. The remark of a Labour minister, Mr. Tom Shaw, that "it was hopeless at present even to dream of" compulsory arbitration, shows that he knew what was expected of him, as it also shows his inability to obey.

There was also the hope in the minds of many of those who followed Lloyd George and put Labour into power in January, 1924, that Labour would discredit itself by inefficiency in capitalist administration on the one hand, and in the eyes of the working-class movement on the other. This hope has not been entirely disappointed. The Labour government's inability to deal effectively with strikes and "left-wing" propaganda ploughed a rich soil for Rothermere and the Foreign Office to manure. On the other

hand, both action and inaction of the Labour government caused disaffection amongst the working class. Those affected by the government's action were generally close enough to the revolutionary movement to remain "Labour" despite their disappointment, but among half-awakened circles there was a more dangerous feeling: "What has the Labour government done for the working man?"

What the Labour government had done for Imperialism in India or Egypt for the edification of food profiteers or building trusts, or for the interests of J. P. Morgan, did not affect these people. What they did feel vaguely was that all this Socialism was so much talk, that nothing had been *done*—no big schemes of employment launched, few houses built, no profiteers hung. . . . These are the Fascisti of the future, if Labour continues on its present lines; and it is their questions that those who are trying to influence and educate the workers along working-class lines must answer first. Their existence already is shown by the voting figures; of Labour's million extra votes some came from the Liberals, some were gained by the seventy-two extra candidates put up, most came from that section of the working class which did not realise that there was a Labour movement until a Labour government took office. But there were definite signs that a body of Labour voters had swung right over.

To sum up: British capitalism still remains in the trough of depression. The interests which see themselves menaced either by a revival of German capitalism or of French capitalism, or both, are beginning to grumble at what "stabilisation" along the lines of the Dawes Plan involves. No one, of course, as yet attacks the Dawes scheme openly, but the capitalist campaign in that direction is on its way.

There are already signs that American tutelage is to be fought, and the mobilisation against America may be seen very soon. In the *Daily Herald* for October 29th, two members of the left wing of the Labour movement attacked the *Times* because of the American affiliations of its owners and spoke of this state of affairs as "a veiled menace to the sovereignty of our people." It is always the most useful work that recruiting agents can do to persuade the Labour movement that the war, present or to come, is just and righteous. Hence it is strange to notice that these two members of the left wing should have chosen exactly the right slogan—"No Dictatorship from Wall Street." The capitalists, on the other hand, are more cautious as yet. The *Evening Standard* has urged that the time is ripe for reconsideration of the whole question of Allied debts to U.S.A. It seems likely to be this kind of sentiment, this mobilisation against the policy of sharing loot with French and American capitalism, which will replace the

experiment of stabilisation and of Labour government. The national "sovereignty" of British capitalism has in the new government of Baldwin, Chamberlain and Churchill an able advocate.

The shape of British capitalism's reaction to Wall Street's policy of "encroaching control" in Europe cannot be, at present, political. Tariffs will enter into it, and the American Merchant Marine is always a vulnerable target. But probably the main lines of "advance" will be in China and a serious attempt to save the Dominions from falling under American domination will be made.

This roughly seems to be the specific conceived by the sections of British capitalism that have come to power. Before the end of the present Parliament it may have to be shortened to a word of three letters—"War."

T. H. WINTRINGHAM.

MOSCOW—1812

FOR a class at the crisis of revolution the importance of being able to make war successfully has always been recognised and is undoubted.

Napoleon was indispensable to the French bourgeoisie in their great revolution because of his excellence as a general. The conditions of France at the time he came to the fore marked out the particular rôle he was called upon to play. What were these conditions? "Without war the Republic would not have existed," the novelist Louvet, the Girondin, had said. But the Girondins "drew back with a cry of horror from the river of blood" which the war of revolutionary defence involved. They were displaced by the Jacobins. A central secret committee took control, protected by the "Terror." It subordinated everything to the military exigency, organised France into a munitions factory, and swung the ragged, sacreligious French revolutionary armies in the sot-face of feudal Europe. Their military skill won, the revolution was saved, and the idea of the revolution carried beyond the borders of France.

The idea of the revolution was the idea of the dominant classes in France; no more feudal dues and oppressions, no more vexatious interference with the capitalist, the lords' and the Church's land for the peasant and the speculator, trial by jury, democratic politics, even republicanism, in short all the appurtenances of bourgeois democracy.

But the democracy of '93 was dangerous to the upper ranks of the capitalists and of the peasantry; they were too logical, ultra-democratic, "radical" as the English phrase goes, too favourable

to the *sans-culotte*. Therefore, as the temper wore down, reaction set in, and the moneyed, respectable class began to make itself felt. The guns of the Republic were turned against the people.

They were turned by the young artillery officer of the name of Bonaparte.

Bonaparte had become prominent because he understood guns and the leading of armed men. But the significant thing about him, apart from this, is not his personal nastiness, about which bourgeois historians delight to quarrel, but the desires of the class which gave him rope. He appeared, on the 18th Brumaire, 1797, as the agent of the class which his ambition told him could give him what he wanted and which recognised in him the man who could give it what it wanted. He summed up two desires on the part of the bourgeoisie and of the peasants: the widespread desire to keep and to consolidate the gains of the revolution, and also the desire of the big French capitalists to exploit the Continent and to humiliate England. "Never has the French Republic," he once wrote, "adopted the principle of making war in the interests of other people." But it did make long and bloody wars to carry out the fantastic scheme of making the economic life of the Continent centre round France, of making Europe independent of sea routes, of smashing the rival bourgeois islanders who had been hounding the French merchants on the seven seas in the last century, till the whole social and cultural leadership of the bourgeois world should acknowledge the lead of French society and each section be content to play the flunkey thereto.

The importance of Napoleon in this scheme was the promise that his military genius would rake in the tribute.

His military prestige did not, it goes without saying, rest solely on his own ability. He drew on the peasant man power of France and the man power and wealth of the Continent. And in order to carry out his ambitious schemes he had to spend and use more and more of these resources and spread French power wider and wider until the fortunes of the Empire were being decided on the Atlantic seaboard at Torres Vedras and on the Russian steppes. At these two places the tide turned; his military prestige was crushed.

"Do you remember, my companions, that fatal field whereon a term was set to the conquest of the world, whereon twenty years of victory were wiped away and there shook from its base the high monument of our glory?"

In some such words one of the principal witnesses to the actions and to the Retreat of 1812 recalls Malorjovoslavetz, the little village outside Moscow where the Grand Army was ground back on to the worn, wasted tracks of its advance.

It is of this campaign, perhaps the more dramatic of the two,

and the one where Napoleon himself was turned, that Belloc tells the story in this book.* He tells the story vividly and for the most part sticking pretty close to the military side of the business. When he wanders off the narrative, as in his praise of Napoleon's effort "to unify Europe" (page 75), he is apt to be erratic. But the story, as it is told by one of the few bourgeois journalists who can still write English, brings out the hideous price the bourgeoisie were prepared for others to pay in the upbuilding of their power.

For that is the main feature of the campaign: the appalling losses. It does not matter that the whole 600,000 who crossed the Niemen, or even the townsfolk who wandered into the winter from Moscow, would be a bagatelle to the losses of a modern army any more than it matters that the number of children in the mills of Lancashire in bourgeois England of the same time would not half fill the board schools of London. Proportionately to the resources of Europe they mattered; the loss to the Europe of the next generation must have been enormous; but to consolidate their revolution and to extend French power the bourgeoisie sacrificed them just as, across the Channel, their English brethren were sacrificing the workers for precisely the same end.

Belloc brings the point out clearly in describing an incident in the Retreat. Napoleon and his generals were nearly trapped on the wrong side of Beresina. It was necessary to build a bridge upstream because Wittgenstein held the bridge-heads of Borissov. Accordingly, in order to get Napoleon across, troops were deployed to put up feint attacks, rearguard actions were fought, and sappers were sent to build the bridge. These sappers epitomise the whole thing:

"It was eight o'clock on Wednesday morning before the sappers went down into the bitter cold of the stream and began the fixing of the first trestles.

"The fierce frost grew deeper and deeper; already in one place and another Beresina was frozen over with a thin coat of ice, while great blocks of it floated down through the still open water of Studienka Ford. . . . By one o'clock in the afternoon four hundred men, waist-deep and more in the midst of the stream (all, or very nearly all, marked for a certain death after such an effort), still toiled at the second bridge throughout the afternoon, their drenching clothing freezing upon them whenever they left the water for the bank to fetch new material, and now and then one and another pulling out the exhausted and dying" (page 263).

* *The Campaign of 1812 and the Retreat from Moscow*, Hilaire Belloc, Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd., 1924, p. 270, 6/- net.

And what was this sacrifice for? Belloc answers that capture there "would have involved the ruin of the revolutionary effort." This passage of the Beresina, the saving of Napoleon's person for future effort, the survival of the marshals and the name at least of the Grand Army, presented the Revolution in its last agony as a thing that would fight to the end, that would leave behind it the confessed tradition of the populace throughout the west, that would compel its enemies to exaggerate their creed through terror, and that would by dying in such a fashion proclaim its resurrection" (page 255).

The Revolution in its retreat still hinged on military events and, as Belloc here points out, the escape of Napoleon just because of his significance to the French bourgeoisie did mean that the middle class revolutions of the last century were profoundly affected. Napoleon's use to the bourgeoisie was never more clearly illustrated than by the way in which the glamour attached to his name as a revolutionary leader enabled him to get the workers and the peasants to sacrifice themselves for them.

For the reality of this Revolution "was the horrors of nineteenth century French bourgeoisdom; but the brink served its purpose; the sappers went into the ice-cold water; bourgeois democracy dragged through the crisis of the Moscow débâcle and was thus, in spite of the defeats of the 1814—15 campaigns, consolidated."

Napoleon's day, however, was done. The sword had been blunted and was flung away. The military dictator was no longer necessary for the Revolution; or, rather, in the ordinary police work of the democratic state adequate protection was found at once against feudal restriction to capitalism and against the *sans-culotte*. When the latter became too restive the Napoleonic bamboozle ("The Legend") could be clattered out just as efficaciously as "the whiff of grape-shot." And then, too, there was always the grape-shot.

DOUGLAS PARSONS.

LOOK OUT

FOR THE

JANUARY PLEBS

WHICH WILL BE

A SPECIAL DOUBLE NUMBER on The British
Labour Movement.

JANUARY 1825—REPEAL OF COMBINATION ACTS.
1925—THE PLEBS DOUBLE NUMBER.

The METHOD of SCIENCE

Dr. Jas. Johnstone here gives the third section of his explanation of scientific method and scientific thought, of which the other two have appeared in the two previous issues.

III.—THE INDUCTIVE METHOD

OBSERVATION, analysis, generalisation and comparisons—such as we have indicated above—enable us to make *inductions*. Thus:—

- (1) Plant organisms build up starch from carbonic acid and water, using the energy of sunlight in the process.
- (2) Animal organisms can only get their starchy foods by eating the starchy parts of other organisms.
- (3) All material substances (hundreds of thousands of known ones) are each of them composed of one or more of about one hundred chemical elements.
- (4) Every massive body in the universe attracts other massive bodies.
- (5) Metals, and saline substances in solution in water, conduct electric currents.
- (6) All organisms grow old and die.

These statements are rather more than generalisations from our experience of nature. A man of seventy years of age knows that his grandchildren will grow old and die (barring accidents). He knows this, though it does not come within his experience. It is universal observation that human beings die (though the *fact* cannot be proved deductively). We project this experience into the future, incorporating it in the regular "course of nature." The knowledge that all men will die is valid and is used in the practical regulation of the affairs of life without hesitation.

Again, all known metals conduct electricity, but some *new* metals are doubtless still to be isolated. We know, from our experience of metals that have been tested that a new one will conduct electricity. All bodies that we have observed attract one another, and in the case of bodies that we have not actually seen and examined, this attraction will also exist. That is not our experience, but it is an induction from our experience.

The Laws of Nature

Each of the above statements (1) to (6) is a "law of nature," and it is an induction based upon our experience, but nevertheless

transcending, or going beyond our experience. Thus we do not know, from actual observation, that some new salt, not yet synthesised by a chemist, will conduct electricity when it is dissolved in water—just because the salt does not yet exist. But chemists know that many salts *that are possible* will be prepared synthetically, and they know that when some of these, having compositions which can be anticipated, are prepared and dissolved in water, they will conduct an electric current. This assurance comes from inductions as to the kinds of saline substances that are conductors.

“Laws” of nature are not commands made by a law-giver (the notion of “laws” does come down from a time when this idea was really held). They are observed *regularities* in natural phenomena. Nature is not a chaos, and things do not happen anyhow. Certain phenomena, energy-transformations, natural changes—whatever we like to call them—always happen in the same way. These ways we have discovered by observation and induction, and we call them laws of nature.

Every regularity of happening in nature is a law, but these laws have different degrees of generality. Thus the earth moves round the sun in an elliptical path—not a true circle—and the imaginary line joining the earth and sun sweeps out the same area in each month, even though the earth is moving faster at some times than at others. This was one of Kepler’s Laws, but it is only a consequence of the law of gravitation as this was formulated by Newton. (So when Halley asked Newton what would be the path of a planet acted upon by a force which varied inversely as the square of the distance, Newton was able to say that the path would be an ellipse.) The law of gravitation has therefore a greater degree of generality than have Kepler’s three laws—or the latter can be deduced from the former.

Fundamental Natural Laws

The great inductions, based on our experience and verified again and again, which possess this high degree of generality, are few in number. They have come to be regarded, in a kind of way, as tests of our results of investigation. New results must fit in with the fundamental natural laws; if they do not, we suspect the accuracy of the observations and inductions leading from these new results.

Such fundamental inductions are :—

Matter can neither be created nor annihilated ;

Energy can neither be created nor annihilated ;

Energy can transform from one type into another one without loss ;

In all such energy-transformations some part of the energy involved passes into the form of heat.

Now these four inductions can be stated as two laws :—

- (1) The energy of the universe is constant ;
- (2) The entropy of the universe tends always to increase.

These are the first and second laws of Energetics, and they are fundamental inductions. They are rather different in their significance. The First Law is *a priori*, that is, *it is in us*. We simply cannot conceive of creation or annihilation, and this is our logical category of substance. There is something beneath all change and phenomena and becoming or happening that is eternal and unchangeable, and this is energy. There can be no exception to the First Law—if there appears to be an exception, we don't believe it and search for an explanation—and always find it.

The Second Law is empirical : it simply states—in a subtle, but highly general and comprehensive manner—the results of all experience. Water runs downhill ; hot bodies cool down to the temperature of their surroundings ; moving bodies set up friction and tend to come to rest ; order passes into chaos. All this we see to happen. We do not see any reason why these things should happen. It is quite *conceivable* that water may run uphill or that heat may pass from a cold body to a hot one. We see a cigarette burn into smoke and ashes, but it is quite conceivable that the smoke and ashes might unite to form a cigarette. Our experience, however, is just that things happen the one way and not the other.

“ Cause and Effect ”

When things happen we often say—What was the cause ? or, What is going to be the effect ? Now, though scientists generally use these terms, cause and effect, in ordinary language and writing, they attach a very precise meaning to the expressions.

Our experience is that natural changes *are related to each other* : when some particular event happens some other particular one will also happen. Thus, when a fragment of carbon is heated in the air it will burn, that is, combine with the oxygen of the air to form carbonic acid gas ; if strychnine is taken into the stomach a man will die with tetanic convulsions ; if coal gas and air are mixed in certain proportions and a match is struck, there will be an explosion. These statements are inductions based on our experience. We might say that (1) the “ cause ” of carbon burning is the oxygen of the air ; (2) that the “ cause ” of tetanic convulsions is the administration of strychnine ; (3) that the “ cause ” of a gas explosion is the striking of a match. In saying these things we should be sloppy and inaccurate. So we say that certain sets of events are related together by an association of *functionality*, or that

one event is a function of some other one. Thus, when a piece of charcoal is heated it combines with oxygen to form carbonic acid, and heat is generated. One of these events, the combination of charcoal and oxygen, we call A, and the other event, the generation of heat, we call B. The relation between them is described by the formula, $B=f(A)$, which reads the event B is a function of the event A. The relation is a quantitative one, that is when the event A has a certain value (so many grams of charcoal being burned) the other dependent event B has a certain value also, no more or no less, so many calories of heat being generated. B, the quantity of heat generated, *depends upon*, or is a function of A (so many grams of charcoal burned).

The fact that charcoal combines with oxygen to form carbonic acid gas is an induction. So is the fact that heat is generated whenever charcoal combines with oxygen. The relation between the two events is another induction.

All energy-transformations (such as the above one), all phenomena or changes can be treated adequately in this way. We make the concept of events that depend on each other, and we invent the device of functionality. We can treat the most complex examples of "cause and effect" by this device, adequately and without ambiguity. Even in the very complex domain of economics treated statistically the same method is effective. Events happening in nature thus become connected by a network of relations, each relation being inductively established.

J. J.

NOTES BY THE WAY

Marx and Kugelmann

An article of some interest to Marxists appears in the current issue (No. 6) of *The Communist International* on "Marx's Letters to Kugelmann." These were first published in 1907, in the *Neue Zeit* with an introduction by Lenin, and are of considerable interest in making clear one or two aspects of Marx's theories. In the first place it shows that the M.C.H. gives no support to a mechanical interpretation of history or to "collapse" and "inevitable" theories—the foolish idea that one day capitalism will automatically collapse and then the masses will rise spontaneously and create socialism as an inevitable effect. Marx emphasises repeatedly the part played by man in making history and the rôle of a workers' party in accelerating the revolution. In a letter dated

April 17th, 1871, he wrote:—"It would be, of course, very convenient to make world history, if the fight were not to be entered upon unless victory were assured. On the other hand world history would be of a very mystic nature if there were no room for 'chance.' This chance itself becomes naturally part of the general trend of development and is compensated by other forms of chance. But acceleration and retardation depend on such 'accidentals' which also include the 'chance' character of people who are at the head of the movement in the beginning."

His attitude to struggle is also clearly shown in these letters, belying the interpretations put upon his theories by Kautsky and Hilferding. To him a struggle had an important moral

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40, Museum Street, London, W.C.1.

effect, even if it were unsuccessful, or it might have value in winning strategic positions for a future advance. In referring to the Paris Commune he wrote: "They (the bourgeoisie) placed the Parisians before the alternative either to take up the fight or to succumb without a fight. In the latter case the demoralisation of the working class would have been much greater misfortune than the loss of any number of 'leaders' through the Paris fight—the fight of the working-class with the capitalist class and its State has entered upon a new phase. Whatever the direct results may be, a new strategic position of world historic importance has been won." In the same issue there are valuable articles on China and on India.

Labour White Papers

We referred last month to an article on the *Condition of the Working Classes*, 1900-1923, appearing in *The Monthly Circular* of the Labour Research Dept. This has now been reprinted as the first number of a series of Labour White Papers (1d. each), which are designed to appear from time to time to provide detailed information to the workers on specific points. Four others were issued during the election, on the Combines, on the Bondholders, on the

Russian Treaty, and on High Prices, and No. 6 has since appeared (price 2d.) on *Labour and Capital in Parliament*, 1924, giving the industrial affiliations of M.P.s, etc., and a map showing the areas where Labour was successful. No Plebs should miss these valuable little papers, and tutors in particular should find them of constant usefulness.

Concentration

Factories have increased by 2000, workshops have decreased by 5000, and there has been a steady closing up of small workshops mostly in rural areas, so reports the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops concerning 1923.

But those who have never read Marx's scientific forecasting of concentration will continue to repeat that Marx is out-of-date.

Free State Victims

Judging from the pages of *Voice of Labour* and the *Irish Worker*, the Irish Labour Movement is pitifully divided; but that need not deter us from pressing our own Government to use its influence to secure the release of the 3000 odd political opponents of the Free State who are incarcerated under the vilest conditions. Write to the I.W.L., 124, Walworth Road, S.E. 17.

The NATIONAL COUNCIL of LABOUR COLLEGES

HEAD OFFICE—22 ELM ROW, EDINBURGH
Gen. Sec., J. P. M. Millar (to whom all reports should be sent)

DERBYSHIRE MINERS.—It is very satisfactory to be able to report that the Derbyshire Miners' Union have decided to arrange an N.C.L.C. Educational Scheme providing for free classes, etc. This adds one more to the many Miners' Unions that support the N.C.L.C.'s work, and the very heartiest thanks are due to all those enthusiasts in the Derbyshire Miners' Organisation whose activities have resulted in the above decision.

Outline Lectures.—Outline lectures are now available for the use of tutors on "Co-operation," and further outlines, this time on the "Science of

Reasoning," are being issued at the time of writing.

Publicity.—Fred Casey is publishing a series of popular outlines on *Economics for All* in the *Rochdale Labour News*. Copies may be had by applying to that paper at 124, Drake Street, Rochdale.

Local Leaflets, etc.—Will College secretaries please note that it will be a great help if they will send to Head Office a copy of everything they publish?

Labour Party Conference and Education.—The following resolution was carried at the Labour Party Conference:—

EDUCATION

"(a) This Conference welcomes the new spirit shown by the Labour government in education. It congratulates them in particular on the reduction in the size of classes, and calls on them to make further advance in this direction so as to ensure that the classes in all elementary schools shall comply with the standard now in force in secondary schools.

"This Conference urges the Government to proceed without delay to carry out the declared policy of the party; and to raise the school age to sixteen with adequate maintenance for all children from fourteen to sixteen years of age.

"It further demands the complete abolition of fees in secondary schools, with such an extension of scholarships as will prevent any child being debarred by poverty from obtaining the education suitable to him or her.

"Finally, it calls upon the Government to bring University education within the reach of all workers: (1) by making the existing Universities accessible by means of a generous system of scholarships, and by increasing the facilities for non-residential students; (2) by encouraging by means of grants or otherwise, opportunities for independent working-class education."

We believe that the addition of the last clause was due to the Barrow Labour party, but it would no doubt be quite unjust to say that they drafted the last paragraph to read as if the Universities *could* provide independent working-class education.

What the Divisions are Doing

Division 1.—The Ilford District of the N.C.L.C. last month held a successful and well-reported Conference on Working-class Education. New classes have been started at Croydon, Sutton, Cricklewood and Camberwell. A Co-operative class is beginning at Barking, while we are running three in South London under the auspices of the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society. London Division is also arranging a series of propaganda meetings.

Division 2.—Conferences were held at Portsmouth and Southampton, but were considerably affected by the

General Election. New classes have begun at Winchester, Witney, Burley and Littlehampton. A good start has now been made in Southampton with the support of the unions having national schemes and of a number of important local bodies. The first lecture at the Burley class concluded with three cheers for the speaker D. W. Thomas, which suggests that the new areas are by no means lacking in enthusiasm.

Division 3.—Lantern lectures are being used with good effect in this Division. The Norwich Labour College booked a theatre for a historical lecture by J. T. Walton Newbold. The crowd was so great that numbers had to be turned away. A good deal of publicity has been done in local papers throughout the Division.

Division 4.—The number of new Labour Colleges in this Division still continues to grow—the latest being the Rhondda District College. In view of the tradition of the Rhondda, the new college should play a very important part in the Division, especially as W. H. Mainwaring is now resident in the area.

Division 5.—The General Election interrupted the work here, but classes are once again in full swing. A controversy in the Bath press is giving us a good deal of publicity.

Division 6.—As this Division is greatly in need of more voluntary tutors, it is satisfactory to be able to report the addition of Fred Silvester to the list. The reduction in the size of the Division should add considerably to the effectiveness of our educational work.

Division 7.—This Division is now getting into its stride. Successful organising work has been done in Grimsby, Wakefield and Lincoln. Goole and Keighley are also "on the move."

Division 8.—The Liverpool and District Labour College is conducting two very successful classes in conjunction with the Educational Committee of the Birkenhead and District Co-operative Society.

Manchester Labour College headquarters have now removed to the small hall, ground floor, Caxton Hall, Chapel Road, Salford, where a series of public lectures are being given on the "Modern Labour Movement."

Manchester has also a list of eleven classes, and there is no doubt that the re-organisation that has taken place is going to mean a substantial development in the area.

North-East Lancs area has arranged a series of five lectures to be given by J. T. Walton Newbold.

Burnley has a very successful class on "Local Government," with J. Hamilton as tutor. Fifty were present at the opening of the course and gave orders for £5 worth of literature on the subject.

Division 9.—Eighty delegates from Labour organisations attended Darlington and District Labour College's Tee-side Conference, with A. Ross (District Secretary A.E.U.) in the chair. Highly appreciated addresses were given by Miss Ellen C. Wilkinson and by Divisional Organiser Rees. In the Darlington area new interest has been awakened and many new adherents have been secured as a result of the work of the new Divisional organiser. A number of large classes are being successfully conducted, with F. Lewis of the N.U.R., as one of the tutors. It is hoped to form a new class at Norton-on-Tees.

Division 10.—*Scotland.*—Ayrshire District reports more students than ever before and a number of new affiliations. Women members of N.U.D.A.W. are attending their classes.

A class has been opened at Oban with over thirty students, and the secretary has received inquiries from Ballachulish and Kinlochleven. The Highlands of Scotland are not meaning to be left behind!

C. L. Gibbons, Edinburgh Staff Tutor, c/o Woodburn, 44, Polwarth Crescent, has prepared very useful lecture dia-

grams on History. These are being sold to students in the Edinburgh area, and supplies may be had *direct from Comrade Gibbons* at the rate of 1d. per copy, postage extra. (Cash with order.)

Glasgow reports highly successful public lantern lectures.

Division 11.—*Ireland.*—With a view to setting on foot Labour Colleges in Ireland, the General Secretary addressed over 300 delegates and friends in Belfast and another representative meeting in Dublin. The chair in the former case was taken by Mr. Stewart, Chairman of the Trades Council, and in the latter case by Mr. O'Brien, General Secretary of the Irish Transport Workers' Union.

Division 12.—Organiser Fred Shaw, of Division 7, reports the formation of an active Labour College for Nottingham area. The support of the Derbyshire Miners' Union should add considerably to our effectiveness in this area, and substantial developments can be looked for now that we have an organiser of our own.

Directory.—Additions and Corrections

Division 2.—Witney L.C.: Secretary, Mr. A. C. Pearce, Bampton Road, Curbridge, Bampton, R.S.O., Oxon.

Division 3.—Luton C.C.: Secretary, Mr. P. Winch, 75, Althorpe Road, Luton, Beds.

Division 7.—Sheffield L.C.: Secretary, Mr. J. Royle, 14, Birken-dale, Uppertorpe, Sheffield.

Division 10.—*Scotland.*—Glasgow D.C.: Secretary, Mr. Peter Campbell, 39, Duke Street, Glasgow.

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The PLEBS Page

"**W**E want to start a Plebs branch in Bromley, and have forty prospective members to begin with."

This was the opening remark of Comrade Faulkner, of Bromley, when calling at the office recently. He explained that the Election had left behind a determination on the part of the local Labour party to know Labour's case from A to Z. We feel there must be many people feeling like that, and now is the time to link them up. Irrespective of the political group inside the Labour movement to which they belong, if they agree upon the principle of I.W.C.E., they ought to come into the pioneer propagandist organisation. We'll be glad to send along *application for membership* forms to any comrade who will strike while the iron is hot.

By the time this is being read the Editor and Hon. Secretary will be back again after their six weeks tour in the U.S.A. To celebrate the occasion, and mark the tenth anniversary of their service to the League, a modest dinner is being given in their honour. Here's luck to 'em, and may we be here to celebrate the twentieth anniversary!

The year has seen some notable advances in I.W.C.E., and the League has helped in securing the participation of the big unions. But there are many trails to be blazed in Labour organisations which still pin their faith to the W.E.A. In the years of Conservative government we can undertake

the necessary ploughing and sowing for a future Labour harvest; necessary steps towards making the workers "bogey-proof," and no longer at the mercy of the confusion of quacks and misleaders.

Business at Buckingham Palace Road is brisk; the new sixpennies are going well, but we can do with *your* help to push them along. Classes are clamouring for *Economic Geography* which is now re-printing, and will again be on sale when this magazine is out. The cheap edition of *Masses and Man* is almost gone—if you want a copy you must send along right now, or you will be disappointed. At the request of many readers of October PLEBS, we got a supply of *Singing Gaolbirds*. Before the books arrived from America every copy had been ordered, and we are now waiting for a further supply. Another book we want to remind you of is Ness Edwards *Industrial Revolution in S. Wales*, a review of which will be appearing in PLEBS shortly. Finally, The PLEBS bound volume for 1924 (7s. 6d. post paid) will be ready very soon after this December issue is in print. The supply is strictly limited; but for those who have filed their year's mags. month by month we shall be able to supply a binding case.

IMPORTANT: Will all Plebs League members note that nominations for the Plebs E. C. for 1925 must reach The PLEBS office *by Dec. 15.*
K. S.

THE AMSTERDAM TRADE UNION INTERNATIONAL

DEAR COMRADE,—We have read with great interest an article written by Mr. Philips Price entitled "Towards a Labour International," appearing in your issue of the present month. In this article we find various reflections on the Amsterdam International, which, had they appeared in a Communist

paper, we should not have taken the trouble to challenge or contradict; but as we were assured that your paper is not a Communist paper, and, moreover, as we learn that your paper caters for "the professors of the future," (as you state in the article, "A Talk to Tutors"), and as your paper is intended to get into the hands

of thousands of Trade Unionists seeking information and instruction (Trade Unionists, by the way, who are organised in the British Trades Union Congress which is affiliated to our body), we feel it to be our duty to write this letter to you, convinced that you will insert it in the next number of your publication.

Mr. Price writes that the "Amsterdam organisation has proved to be an unwieldy body" . . . "all too easily captured by a group of people totally out of touch with the active elements in the trade union. May we respectfully draw your attention to the fact that the British section is represented on the Secretariat, Executive Committee and General Council of our Federation by Messrs. J. W. Brown, A. A. Purcell, F. Bramley, A. J. Cook and G. Hicks. We leave it to you and to your readers to judge whether these people belong to the category of those 'out of touch with the active elements in the trade unions.'"

Further down, Mr. Price writes that the task of bringing about some reconciliation between Amsterdam and Moscow is as difficult as it is because "in Amsterdam a fossilised type of trade union mandarin has dug himself in and acquired vested interest in the concern." We have already given you an example of the "trade union mandarins" of Great Britain who have "acquired vested interest in the concern." That, of course, is only the British side of the question. We are not aware as to whether such names as Leipart, Grassmann or Aufhäuser of Germany, Jouhaux, Lenoir and Buisson of France, Mertens or Solau of Belgium, Oudegeest, Stenhuis, Fimmen or Smit of Holland, d'Aragona or Azimonti of Italy, Caballero or Saborit of Spain, Tayerle of Czecho-Slovakia, Dürr of Switzerland, Madsen of Denmark, Jaszi of Hungary, Hueber or Maier of Austria, Thorberg of Sweden, Zulawski of Poland, Morics of Latvia, Hoffer of Bulgaria, or Krecik of Jugoslavia, in contradistinction to the British representatives, are samples of the "fossilised type" of continental "trade union mandarin" who are totally out of touch with the active elements in the trade unions of their own country.

There is another statement in Mr.

Price's article which requires rectification. He writes that "meanwhile the united front is already by way of being established in many International Trade Secretariats." Let us first of all say that what we want is not a "united front" but a *united movement*. With this in view, attempts to establish unity with the Russian trade unions have been made repeatedly by our International ever since its inception.

You will, of course, know the decision taken at our Vienna Congress this summer on the question of unity within the international trade union movement, and we may add that letters have now been exchanged with the Russian Trade Union Centre in order to see whether an agreement can be reached on the basis of the Vienna resolutions.

In reply to the statement "that the united front is already by way of being established in many International Trade Secretariats," we beg to refer to the resolution on the subject passed at the Conference between the Executive of our Federation and the International Trade Secretariats, which reads:—

"This Conference of International Trade Secretariats of May 31st and June 1st declares that the International Federation of Trade Unions of Amsterdam is to be recognised as the only International organisation of trade unions. . . .

"The Conference further decides that, should the International Trade Secretariats find themselves compelled to deviate from the rule, they are requested to refer beforehand to the management committee of the International Federation of Trade Unions, or at least to a meeting of the bureau, with the addition of the three representatives of the International Trade Secretariats."

This resolution clearly states what is the position of the International Trade Secretariats, and for the information of your readers and of Mr. M. Philips Price, we beg to state that at the Congresses of the International Trade Secretariats, as enumerated hereunder (viz., the congresses which have been held in the course of the current year, i.e., after our own Vienna Congress), the admission of the Russian Trade Unions which try to get in to wreck our "yellow" organi-

sations, has either not been mooted at all, or has been rejected:—

| | | |
|--------------------|--------|------------|
| Clothing-workers, | May, | Vienna. |
| Building-workers, | June, | Stockholm. |
| Hairdressers, | July, | Vienna. |
| Transport-workers, | July, | Hamburg. |
| Metal-workers, | July, | Vienna. |
| Miners, | Aug., | Prague. |
| Furriers, | July, | Berlin. |
| Textile-workers, | Aug., | Vienna. |
| Printers, | Sept., | Hamburg. |
| Glass-workers, | Sept., | Prague. |
| Land-workers, | Sept., | Berlin. |
| Postal-workers, | Sept., | Vienna. |
| Leather-workers, | July, | Berlin. |

The particular purpose of your paper is education, and when a man whose name is as well known in Great Britain as Mr. Philips Price makes assertions of the kind which appear over his name this month, students will be apt to think that the statements are correct, for since it is hardly to be conceived that you would send instructors to your colleges who had not an accurate knowledge of their facts, and who have not, before lecturing, spent "two nights—three or four if necessary—in preparation for their lecture," as suggested in your "Talk to Tutors," therefore the same principle will be expected to apply to articles in your paper.

We should now like to ask Mr. Price to substantiate his statements about the "fossilised mandarins" and the trade secretariats who are pressing the Russians to their hearts behind the back of the I.F.T.U. That is the least we may expect of a man who is educating the workers up to internationalism and international solidarity.

Yours fraternally,

J. SASSENBACH,

Secretary, International Federation of Trade Unions.

Mr. Philips Price writes in reply:—

If Mr. Sassenbach had taken the trouble to read my article carefully, he would have seen that I was just as critical of the tactics of the R.I.L.U. as I was of the I.F.T.U. The fact that he rushes into a lengthy defence of the present leadership of the I.F.T.U. confirms me in the belief that he has a guilty conscience and realises that there is something rotten in the state

of Amsterdam. If he had further read my article carefully he would have seen that I was merely backing up the statements, in perhaps more vigorous language, of the author of the book which I was reviewing. Here is a passage which proves this on page 117: "From the organisational standpoint the present I.F.T.U. is out of date. The question arises whether side by side with the I.F.T.U. and the R.I.L.U. it is necessary to establish a new International out of the International Trade Secretariats. For my part, at this juncture I am definitely opposed to anything of the kind. The creation of a third Trade Union International would only make confusion worse confounded. The question whether, soon or late, a more closely compact and permanent fusion of the International Trade Secretariats will come into existence apart from the extant Trade Union Internationals depends in large measure upon the attitude assumed by these two bodies." The whole gist of Fimmen's argument is that the two Trade Union Internationals are not capable of carrying out the work for which they were intended, viz., of industrially organising the workers on an international scale. After pointing out this failure, he suggests that the revivifying of the Industrial Movement must come through the International Trade Secretariats. If Fimmen's book does not prove the truth of my statement that the Amsterdam bureau is "out of touch with the active elements of the trade unions," it proves nothing. It is no use Mr. Sassenbach pointing to the names of J. W. Brown, A. A. Purcell, F. Bramley, A. J. Cook and G. Hicks to show that I include them under the category of "fossilised mandarins." The records of the debates at the recent Vienna Congress of the I.F.T.U. together with a certain interjection reminding the German Trade Unionists of the tradition of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, acquit the English side of the bureau of deserving that expression.

Sassenbach quotes a number of resolutions passed by the I.F.T.U. concerning the latter's attitude towards the Russians, and in a curiously obtuse manner fails to see that these resolutions are nothing more than an ulti-

matum to the Russian Trade Unions to capitulate and come into the I.F.T.U. on the latter's terms. It is just this sort of attitude which characterises the mentality of "fossilised mandarins" to which I refer in my review. It is indeed this failure to deal tactfully with the R.I.L.U. that I criticise so strongly in the I.F.T.U., although I admit that the former by its abusive methods of propoganda has only got all it asked for. By the perpetuation of these tactics, however, the united front will not be attained. Sassenbach does not want the united front, but a "united movement." I submit that

the united movement will never be attained by the cold-shouldering of the Russian Trade Unions and by veiled ultimatums to them.

I would further point out to Mr. Sassenbach that I did not state that a united front had already been established in many International Trade Secretariats, but that it was "by way of being established." I would further add that, as I am informed, Fimmen went to Moscow after the International Transport Workers' Conference at Hamburg to prepare the way for closer co-operation. Along these lines, I submit, the hope lies.

LETTERS

DEAR COMRADE,—May I trespass on your valuable time to venture my opinion on an article in the October PLEBS (which I have just received), to wit, M. Gold's poem and the extract from his letter relating to his decision to have finished with the moonlight-roses, etc., variety.

I think his decision is wrong, for though I've not read any of his poems, I'd be very sorry to hear that he or any other poet who becomes converted to the Labour Movement renounces that sort of poetry and turns to the "proletarian kind." Such poetry would make for the monotonous in literature, and as monotony (the curse of the present-day worker) is to be avoided in work, let it be avoided in literature. It would not help much if after each day's monotonous work the worker returned home to find the monotonous strain continued in his paper, books, music and maybe his PLEBS even.

I find that J. F. H., in the "Plebs Bookshelf," expresses the same opinion. We are all too prone to make "first things first" all the time and every time, and while it may certainly make for success, we have other things to consider.

I find a fellow-miner practically enunciating these things in one sentence: "We want novels as well as textbooks." May I also add, "Poetry and plays?" We must attract the youth of the country to our movement,

for in them lies its whole future; therefore, keeping in mind that they are practically fresh from school with a prejudiced mind and an outlook on life totally based on the capitalistic point of view, we must lead them gently along, not drive them.

We can do this best by giving them novels, etc., that they enjoy reading. We certainly will not do so by giving them poetry of the sort that Gold has written here, for after having been accustomed to associate poetry with a more or less delightful rhythm, it would seem rather crude; they would be inclined to view it as rather a retrograde step, and take no further interest in any of our literature.

So we must supply them at first with the stuff they like, even if it is the moonlight-roses, etc., stuff, for it certainly appeals to youth—in fact to everybody at one time or another.

It may seem strange that a manual worker, who, the less brains he has or uses, the better he suits the employers, should be able to appreciate such stuff. But with the better education now prevailing, it is not so surprising after all, and it is certainly increasing.

It has been all due to lack of a leader rather than lack of appreciation of the beautiful as expressed in such poetry and novels. Even a slum child, given the proper lead and encouragement, is able to visualise that beauty, even though it be green fields with

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plenty of flowers which are being praised. We must take that lead, and take it now.

I am, etc., Yours fraternally,

J. P.

LLENINISM

DEAR COMRADE,—Have you space for a word of warm appreciation of Andrew Rothstein's article under this caption in the November PLEBS? ('Tis not a good rule never to write a letter unless you can dip your pen in gall!) In his excellent notes in the same issue, the acting editor remarks on the need that we Plebeians should "relate our teaching more closely to the actual struggle." Comrade Rothstein's little essay would seem to be an instalment of an attempt to do this. His opening sentence, "Leninism is Marxism in the period of imperialism" is a pithy phrase; a criterion whereby the "Marxism" of Kautsky and Bauer and Hilferding can be distinguished from the "Marxism" of Trotsky and Buharin. You can substitute British names for Continental at your own sweet will and pleasure!

"G. A. H." in the November *Labour Monthly* makes this conception of Leninism the criterion by which he criticises Fimmen's *Labour's Alternative*. Fimmen, says "G. A. H.," shows the cloven hoof when he talks of the "internationalisation" of capitalist interests, inasmuch as "the outstanding fact of contemporary capitalist development" is "the struggle between the great imperialist groups, a struggle which is now clearly leading to a great imperialist war, a struggle which, viewed dialectically, equally clearly bears within itself the germs of a world revolution." Maybe there will occur one or two more world wars to end war before the time is ripe for the world revolution! But we do not think there is any conflict with "Leninism" in Jack London's theory of an international organisation of the Iron Heel. (They are hard at work at it in Geneva.) And in either case Fimmen's insistence upon the urgent need for the international unification of the industrial forces of labour is timely. "G. A. H." complains of Fimmen because he "has no word to say of the revolutionary working-class party" whose historical task "is the seizure of power."

Well, well! We are communists like G. A. H., but we do not believe that at the moment all the work in the fighting labour movement must necessarily be done under the aegis of the Communist party. There is work for the Red educational movement and for the Red industrial movement, as well as for the Red political movement. We think that Rothstein admits this, and that is why we welcome his *Leninism* as a topic for I.W.C.E. students to discuss.

Yours fraternally,

E. & C. P.

DEAR COMRADE,—Andrew Rothstein makes a suggestion which attractive as it must be to all enthusiastic workers in the I.W.C.E. Movement, viz., that we shall make "Leninism" a subject for special study, nevertheless requires of us who are responsible for the lines of PLEBS policy a very careful and critical attitude. I should say that all our Labour College students should, in second or third year classes, take as a subject, "The Theory and Practice of the Working-Class Movement" and should examine how the thought and activity of those working-class organisations which we have had to deal with in this country have varied across the years. Into such a study "Leninism" would inevitably enter there to serve as to some extent a guide and, if I may dare to say so, to some extent a warning.

The greater significance of Lenin will, in my judgment, be found in his understanding and handling of a situation involving the whole world in such a way as to win for the workers and peasants of his own country enduring emancipation from capitalism and opportunity freely to build up the economy of socialism within the framework of a proletarian dictatorship. Lenin so thoroughly mastered the problems of his own country, not only internal but also external, that it is unreasonable to expect of him an intimate acquaintance with the internal problems with which we, at the other end of Europe's political, social and economic scale, must know how to get to grips.

"Leninism," finding its primary expression in the ideology incarnate in the Soviet state, knew how to identify Communism with the collective con-

sciousness of the Russian people and to awaken the spirit of a nation.

"Leninism," for the very reason that caused it to triumph in Russia, is in grave danger of failing miserably outside of Russia and in countries whose economic and social development have given rise to an altogether different ideology. This is all the more likely now that the disciples of the master have elevated his teachings into a veritable cult, seeking quite naturally in an appeal to this new standard of the infallible an ever ready answer to all who criticise their interpretations and their actions.

We are not afraid to learn from Lenin but we are alarmed at the prospect of being dogmatised by the "Leninists."

The PLEBS has behind it a record of achievement in making easily understood and readily acceptable to these conservative islanders the theory of Marxism. We have picked up the Marxist literature of many countries, read it and then translated it into our mother tongue so that it hitched on to our native thought. That has been our first achievement. Now we are quite definitely passing on to another, to one for which we have have been more or less consciously preparing ourselves for years, viz., the development of Marxist theory and practice along lines harmonising with our own economic, social and political evolution in this island of Great Britain and with the attitude of mind common to the English speaking peoples. We have been to school in Chicago and in Berlin and in Moscow, learning abroad—even as the wisest of our masters have always gone to learn abroad all that they could—how to train our own working class to be the British ruling class.

We have use for the writings of Lenin. We have, however, even more use for his wondrous understanding of how to harness to ends that he and we have seen the genius and consciousness and pride of the nation to which he belonged.

Yours very truly,

J. T. WALTON NEWBOLD.

THE STANDARD OF OUR EDUCATION

DEAR COMRADE,—“M. H. D.” undoubtedly strikes the right note in this month's PLEBS when he emphasises the need to raise the quality of our

education. During the past few years we have been so concerned about extending the scope of our activities that we have, perhaps, been inclined to neglect the all-important questions of quality and standard. It is not enough to say that our point of view on education is the correct one: it is incumbent upon us to demonstrate that the character of our educational practice surpasses all other brands the working class is asked to accept.

It is well to face the fact that this is not sufficiently stressed in our N.C.L.C. classes. There is far too much routine work going on, and an entire absence of originality. For how many years have our "leaders of thought" in South Wales regarded the first ten chapters of the first volume of "Capital as the Alpha and Omega of Education for the Worker Student"? Such a policy has produced its inevitable result—a complete stalemate in working-class educational developments in this part of the country; and in more than one centre students satiated with this type of doctrinairism are turning to other educational bodies for more solid intellectual grain.

Last winter I was given the opportunity of visiting some N.C.L.C. classes in various parts of the country; and I was certainly disappointed with the standard of education imparted there. The so-called lectures in some places were not lectures at all, but a series of denunciatory tirades against some monstrosity called capitalism, with oratory that descended to the commonplace and grammar that gave one the creeps. It is not my intention to raise the old bogey of education *versus* propaganda, but—and let us face the fact—there is a difference, at least in practice, between them. Our classes are, or should be, primarily educational institutions; and their purpose is, or ought to be, the development of understanding not the imparting of belief. It is true that by converting our classes into places where people may listen to fiery rhetorical onslaughts on capitalism and Labour leaders, a certain type of mentality will be attracted. But it will not be the student type; and the adoption of such methods will in no way further the cause of I.W.C.E.

A particularly strong vice in our

movement is what one may call, for lack of a better term, the "cult of the phrase," by means of which words do duty for ideas and sounds are substitutes for sense. In most of the classes I have visited I have been impressed by the number of times I heard such phrases as "economic conditions," "economic necessities," "socially necessary labour," and a number of other equally absurd terms. In most cases the teacher is to blame for this; for when he persists in using such glib phrases on every occasion, and often puts them forward as the final causes of all mortal things, the unsophisticated listener soon begins to think that such ridiculous abstractions are the hall-mark of a scientific terminology.

The new direction The PLEBS has recently given to our educational work is a welcome antidote to these enervating tendencies. The secrets of working-class emancipation are not to be found in the pages of "Das Kapital" (I was surprised to read Eden and Cedar Paul's complaint that Marx did not solve the problem of population!), but in understanding and interpreting the material that is constantly unrolling itself before our eyes in home and world affairs. The PLEBS is certainly doing good work in emphasising the Imperialist phase of the world drama; but we cannot afford to neglect developments at home. Since the war a revolution has taken place in the economics of British capitalism—the growth of combines, concentration, finance, wages, industrial conditions, etc.—and it is from these that we have to garner the material for our economic studies and not from the pages of the sages of the nineteenth century.

Yours fraternally

D. J. W.

WELLS AND HISTORY

DEAR EDITOR,—There is a review of my *Short History of the World* of distinguished stupidity in your issue for November. It is stated that "no mention is made of the fact that Greek civilisation rested on the basis of a slave economy." This is untrue (see page 79). Your readers are told that I, "ignorant of the pressure of their

numbers," do not tell why the Vandals and Goths and so forth invaded the Roman Empire. On the contrary, this is made perfectly clear in pages 115-116 and in chapter xxxv. My chapter on the "Industrial Revolution" is all wrong, it appears, because it isn't just the ordinary Communist chatter about "Kepitalism." I don't use that vague, dangerous word. "Capital" is the worst defined word in public discussion, and Professor Cannan has written a whole textbook on Economics without using it. The animal origin of man and its significance in our lives has not penetrated through your reviewer's skull, and he reproaches me with writing "both a history of the world and a history of mankind" as though these were two different stories. "Surely," he writes, "it would have been better to have left the amoeba to its primitive slime." Amoeba! Primitive slime! He hasn't even looked at the chapter. There is nothing there about amoebæ and slime, and there is much about the growth of life to consciousness and conscious co-operation. "The German Revolution of 1918 is not so much as mentioned," he says and adds, "No. I am not joking." And, indeed, poor dear, he isn't! And he might have added that the results of the last three general elections and particularly the turnover of votes in Battersea and Glasgow, are neglected altogether. Also, oh, ye gods!—there is no mention—in a 261-page history of all life, mind you, of—capitals please!—THE MANORIAL VILLAGE COMMUNITY and MEDIEVAL GUILDS. But why stop there? The land tenure of China under the Shang dynasty, the labour troubles of the Pyramid builders, the secret societies of West Africa, the interesting custom of Wangty-wang in Little Bango and the institution of the Dunmow Fritch, are, to be frank about it, also ignored. (I am not joking.)

Then he declares, quite falsely, that I "attribute most influence to great men" because I give a six-page picture of the life of that magnificent example of the final decay of the Roman Imperial system, Charles V., and deal with that vast empty noise and disaster, Napoleon I., in one page. But the former life is quintessential

of a cardinal phase in European development, and the latter was simply part of the violent dislocations that followed the first French Revolution. Even now, after a single century, his uproar is dying away. But what can you expect of a reviewer so dreadfully resolved to condemn that he can say I write "in the interests of the few" and so being obsessed by the "great man" theory "attribute influence"—to that poor old recluse at Yuste. The whole of my chapter upon Charles V. is a study of ineffectiveness in the face of uncontrollable forces. Moreover, in my pamphlet *The Destiny of the Future*, Mr. Gray will find the completest denial of the "great man" view of history.

And really, Mr. Editor, what have I done that you let off this sort of reviewer at my head? The man isn't capable of scoring at a cricket match. You have a very able group of reviewers and critics available. Why hand me over to this Gray without grey matter?

Very sincerely yours,

H. G. WELLS.

4, Whitehall Court, S.W. 1.

J. L. GRAY replies:—

I have no space to answer in detail all the points in this letter. I stick to my original statements, which were made very carefully. Mr. Wells appears to believe that he is convicting me of inaccuracy when he refers to a passage on page 79 where it is stated that thousands of Greek slaves had no vote. That is all. Why there were slaves, and what part they played in the social structure, is not explained. But Mr. Wells' slick controversial methods fail him when he attempts to make a virtue of writing a chapter on the Industrial Revolution without introducing even the *conception* of Capitalism! (He will be sorry to learn, by

the way, that, since I am a Scotsman, I am incapable of uttering the sounds represented by "Kepitalism"; nor am I a Communist.)

I need only single out one thing more. With heavy scorn Mr. Wells actually boasts about his omission of all reference to the medieval social institutions of the village community and the urban handicraft guilds in his chapters on the Middle Ages! I frankly find it almost incredible. For all serious students of history he has condemned himself out of his own mouth. Here is a definite challenge. I assert emphatically that two-thirds of any treatment of the Middle Ages ought to deal with the agrarian basis of the feudal and ecclesiastical structure, and with the town industry whose growth, along with the expansion of foreign trade, ultimately destroyed it and created the modern industrial state. Here is the issue between what I have called the scientific and the "fairy-tale" views of history, made unmistakable by Mr. Wells' unexpected and naive confession of faith.

Finally, I could have multiplied examples of the Charles V. slop; but was merciful. Ruling classes, being few in numbers, are always apt to regard history as having been made by a few, the Great Men. Very naturally too, for to recognise the fundamental part that classes and mass social movements have played is to recognise that Capitalism must inevitably disappear.

What is clearly wrong with Mr. Wells is that he receives too much adulation. A solitary hostile criticism in the chorus of perfunctory praise rattles him so badly that he screams out this undignified screed. But no amount of silly overbearing abuse will persuade me that his view of history is other than obsolete, unscientific, false and detestable.

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