

The November 1925

# PLEBS



They will  
keep on  
trying!

MONTHLY FOURPENCE

READY NOVEMBER 9TH

*The New PLEBS Textbook*

# AN OUTLINE OF EUROPEAN HISTORY

from the Decay of Feudalism  
to the Present Day

*with 6 maps, Bibliography,  
Pronouncing Glossary, Index,  
&c., &c.*

Price 2s. 6d. (postpaid, 2s. 8d.). Per 12, £1 6s.  
Per 25, £2 10s.

*Order at once from*

PLEBS, 162a BUCKINGHAM PALACE ROAD,  
LONDON, S.W.1

# THE PLEBS

---

---

Vol. XVII

November, 1925

No. II

---

---

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Pleb Point of View .. .. . <i>J. F. H.</i>	418
The Plebs "Outline of European History": Two Appreciations	
I. <i>By Eden &amp; Cedar Paul</i>	421
II. <i>By T. A. Jackson</i>	423
Plebs Queries: Has the I.L.P. a Future? <i>M. Philips Price</i>	427
The Place of Literature in Workers' Education <i>H. W. L. Dana</i>	431
On Selling "Plebs" .. .. . <i>By "The M. S. M."</i>	436
Notes by the Way .. .. .	441
Letters: <i>from G. Phippen, F. Casey, F. Cain, J. P. M. Millar, J. F. Horrabin, T. P. Keating, G. Marrin and G. E. Graf</i> .. .. .	442
Reviews: A History of Capitalism: Five Years' Futility: A Study in Social Psychology: A Philosopher in a Fog: A French Economics Textbook: Czech Tales: Cobbett .. .. .	446
National Council of Labour Colleges: Notes & News	450
What Plebs Leaguers are Doing .. .. . <i>W. H.</i>	453
The Plebs Bookshelf: Thoughts on Capitalism, Burglary, &c. .. <i>T. A. J.</i>	455

---

Published by The PLEBS LEAGUE,  
162a Buckingham Palace Road, London, S.W.1.

## The PLEB POINT of VIEW

**T**HERE were not many things about the Liverpool Labour Party Conference upon which class-conscious workers can look back with much satisfaction. But on one point, at least, we who believe in Independent Working-Class Education have reason to congratulate ourselves; that is, on the passing of an Education Resolution which, at any rate by implication, commits the Labour Party to a recognition of the fundamental principles of the Labour College movement. "This Conference," says the resolution, "declares that the only sure hope of the permanent achievement of the aims of Labour lies in education, and in the development of types and methods of education which will create amongst children the qualities and outlook essential to citizens of a Co-operative Commonwealth. . . ."

True, nothing is said about adult education—which is probably due to somebody on the Standing Orders Committee being anxious to avoid discussion of the relative merits of the N.C.L.C. and the W.E.A. But what the resolution does admit is that "education," as supplied by a capitalist State, is insufficient for Labour's needs; and it calls for the "development" of new "types and methods of education," aiming at giving people an anti-capitalist outlook and a bias in favour of a Co-operative Commonwealth. "Tendencious" education, in short—education with an aim, and that a specifically Labour aim; the very things The PLEBS has been preaching for years!

Now that the Labour Party has recognised Labour's need for a particular *kind* of education, it ought to be easy for I.W.C.E.ers everywhere to rub in the obvious corollary that it is useless to expect Capitalism to supply that education. What Labour needs, Labour will have to provide for itself. And since we cannot hope to capture the whole educational machinery of Capitalism until such time as we are strong enough to destroy Capitalism itself, we must perforce in the meantime concentrate on doing this vitally necessary educational work among adult workers. In short, we have to help on the "development" of the Labour College Movement.

There is a sort of Labour politician who hates having the some what loose generalisations which are the customary stuff of resolutions brought down to "brass tacks" in this way. But it is our job to get down to the brass tacks. And the rhetoricians have to be made to realise just what "education which will create the qualities and

*Rub It In!*

outlook essential to citizens of a Co-operative Commonwealth" implies. Those qualities and that outlook will not be created by capitalist history or capitalist economics—any more than the Co-operative Commonwealth will be reached *via* capitalist politics. They will not be created merely by the "raising of the full time school-leaving age to sixteen"—thus ensuring that capitalist history and economics will be pumped into children for an additional two or three years; or by the provision of "ladders" leading from capitalist elementary schools through capitalist secondary schools to capitalist universities. They can only be created by means of an educational system undertaken by Labour itself; an educational system planned and carried out for the specific purpose of bringing nearer the Co-operative Commonwealth by ending Capitalism.

"How crude," some of our friends will exclaim! Well, the naked truth *is* crude—and crudity is an excellent antidote to an over-dose of respectability. The educational institutions of a Capitalist State stand for Capitalism, which is the negation of the Co-operative Commonwealth. And that is the crude fact which we I.W.C.E.ers must go on rubbing in.

## FRED BRAMLEY

**W**E desire to add our tribute to the memory of Fred Bramley. In the sphere of working-class education he did not see eye to eye with us; and those of us who heard his magnificent speech on Russia at the Scarborough Trades Union Congress wondered the more at his loyalty to the W.E.A. idea. But he was a straight fighter and a fine comrade. As rank-and-filers in the Labour army we mourn his loss.

Mr. Ramsay MacDonald has never missed an opportunity of expressing his disdain for the Labour College Movement. He went out of his way to get in another sneer at our expense in *Forward* (Oct. 10th).

For at least twelve months, newspaper articles, manifestoes, conclaves had taken in hand the flabby, time-serving, super-cautious being of the Labour Party. It was losing the confidence of the masses—it was going to perdition. We had all got old, and we had been educated outside Labour Colleges. . . .

Would it be possible for Mr. MacDonald to try and remember in future that thousands of keen Labour Party workers—the men

and women on whose energy and enthusiasm he and other leaders depend—have been and are students of Labour Colleges ; and that they accordingly resent little spitefulnesses of this sort ?

We are pledged, under the T.U.C. Scheme, to abstain from calling in question the “good faith” of the W.E.A. But we do not feel that that undertaking precludes us from *Queer Company* quoting, and commenting on, a testimonial to its work which has recently come into our hands. It is a letter which runs as follows :—

*ULSTER UNIONIST LABOUR ASSOCIATION.*

*President :*

Lord Carson of Duncairn.

Old Town Hall, Belfast,

26th August, 1925.

DEAR SIR,—Recently a deputation from the Association waited upon the Vice-Chancellor of the Queen’s University, Professor Lemberger, and others, with a view to obtaining particulars regarding the Workers’ Educational Classes.

I enclose you the details of the W.E.A., and your Executive strongly urge that you should take advantage of these classes, which offer exceptional facilities.

The Honorary Secretary of the W.E.A. has very kindly consented to attend the Monthly Meeting on Saturday, 5th September, and explain the details more fully, and it is hoped that you will make a special effort to be present on that occasion.

Yours truly,

A. W. HUNGERFORD  
(Secretary).

One may be fairly certain that, whatever its aims may be, the Ulster Unionist Labour Association (President, Lord Carson of Duncairn) does not stand for “an education which will create the qualities and outlook essential to citizens of a Co-operative Commonwealth” ; nor, in the words of the T.U.C. Educational Scheme, for “equipping the workers . . . in the work of securing social and industrial emancipation.” But the W.E.A. is, under the T.U.C. Scheme, committed precisely to that aim. May we ask, then, why it seeks the support of Conservative-Labour organisations ? And will Trade Unionists ask themselves whether, if the education supplied by the W.E.A. is considered good for them by gentlemen like Lord Carson, it is really likely to help them to realise the aims of Trade Unionism ?

J. F. H.

# The PLEBS OUTLINE of EUROPEAN HISTORY

## Two Appreciations

*The new Plebs Textbook, "An Outline of European History from the Decay of Feudalism to the Present Day," will be ready on November 9th. We print two appreciations of the book by comrades who have seen advance copies.*

### I

**T**HERE are two contrasted views of history. One was expressed by a leading historian of the old school, Gibbon, when he wrote: "History is little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind." To such historians, history appears as a sort of glorified *Newgate Calendar*. The other view was expressed by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*: "The history of all past society is a history of class struggles." The latest addition to the series of Plebs Textbooks, *An Outline of European History from the Decay of Feudalism to the Present Day*, is an attempt to sketch the history of Europe from this modern working-class outlook.

The whole I.W.C.E. movement is an endeavour to reconsider the essentials of education from a specifically working-class outlook. It is not our business here to restate the general case for that movement. We take it for granted. The question the students and class-leaders in N.C.L.C. work have to consider, the question the Plebs League has to consider in supplying textbooks for use in the Labour Colleges, is: "What are the essentials of education from a working-class point of view?" The Plebs Textbooks are the League's answer.

This does not mean that the order in which the manuals are issued is a key to the relative importance of the subjects treated. Psychology, or the Science of Behaviour; Economics, or the Science of Production in Relation to Human Welfare; Imperialism, a Study of the Last Phase of Capitalism; Economic Geography, the Examination of the Relationship between the Natural Conditions of the Earth's Surface and the Economic Determination of History; Industrial History; the History of the Working-Class Movement;

Scientific Method—all of these, and more than all of these, are “essentials” of proletarian education in the present stage of the working-class movement, when the workers, growing class-conscious, are reaching out for the knowledge that will enable them to play their part in the moulding of the historical process. It is difficult to say that one of the subjects named is more “important” than the others; it is impossible to arrange them in a graded series of importance. The order in which the Plebs Textbooks have been issued has been accidental. Ours is a fighting organisation, and each book appears when the circumstances of the struggle make its writing and its publication possible.

Now that the time has come for the publication of *An Outline of European History*, it is desirable to make a brief statement of the reasons why working-class students must find a place for international history in their crowded curriculum. Some students are a little inclined to take the Newgate Calendar view of history. At school they were fed-up with the “historic page of kings and crowns unstable,” and they are a little inclined to challenge the teaching of history as a part of I.W.C.E. Well, we agree that it would be a waste of time for a labour-college student to read *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Such a general sketch as H. G. Wells’ *Outline of History* comes into a different category. When he writes history, just as when he is writing a novel or a treatise on sociology, or a *Modern Utopia*, this author is pre-eminently skilled in making his readers “see pictures.” The pictures in his *Outline* need a good deal of corrective from the working-class standpoint, for Wells lacks the Marxist understanding of history, but they are good pictures none the less. Yet the book is quite unsuited for use in N.C.L.C. courses, and should be reserved for private relaxation and for reference. What our students need is history treated from the angle envisaged in the *Communist Manifesto*. Why do they need it? Let us translate a few sentences from the opening chapter of Comrade Pokroffsky’s admirable *Outline of Russian History*—a work which, unfortunately, is not yet available in English.

“Why is it necessary to study the past? . . . Should we not do better to concentrate our attention upon what is going on to-day . . . upon the things on which our lives actually depend? . . . We study the past in order that we may understand what is happening to-day. . . . Thus we can learn the general trend of events and can foresee the future. Now, he who can foresee the future, can control the future; for, if we foresee the future, we can get ready for it, we can take measures that will enable us to avoid future misfortunes, and to turn to the best account whatever advantages the future may have to offer. Knowledge gives foresight, and foresight gives power of control. A knowledge of the past gives us, in fact, power over the future.”

The thought here voiced by one of the most distinguished of living historians is part of the common heritage of the working-class



movement to-day. It inspired Mark Starr's excellent little book *A Worker Looks at History*; it inspired R. W. Postgate in the collection of and comment upon the admirable series of documents in his volume *Revolution*, and in his other notable historical studies, it has inspired the writers of *An Outline of European History*.

The difficulties of the task were stupendous. How is it possible, within the covers of a half-crown volume, to give an intelligible sketch of European history? Only by rigid concentration, and by the exclusion of all detail that does not bear on the guiding thought. The practical experience of working-class students and class leaders in the course of the next year or two will provide much useful criticism, and will doubtless enable a second edition to be amended. But, as a first attempt, the *Outline* will prove of enormous value. No other manual has tried to cover the same ground, to give a general sketch of the industrial and social development of Europe, of international history as contrasted with national history, seen as "a worker looks at it," and as the organised and educated workers must know that history if the knowledge is to be turned to good account in *making history, in shaping the future to working-class ends.*

EDEN AND CEDAR PAUL.

## II

### THE PRACTICAL UTILITY OF IMAGINATION

**W**HY it is I do not quite know, but the fact remains that quite an appreciable number of good and worthy comrades have of late contracted a fearful terror of anything at all resembling "learning." Absorbed in the struggle upon "immediate issues," keenly zealous to obtain tangible results, they associate all diligent study with arm-chairs and slippers ease. Dusty from the battle, they incline to treat we poor souls who devour books much as an express rider would treat a boy chasing butterflies across the road.

That history has its value they admit—in theory. In practice they doubt the utility of any history that dates further back than the last General Election. They are, in short, "practical" men; and as such have a proper and traditional contempt for mere "theorisers."

And even at a Plebs conference, among people banded together by their common belief in the need for education of a more critical and thoroughgoing sort than any of the brands officially made available, your ultra-proletarian arises to proclaim his desire for "education without frills on" and to pour scorn upon history,

literature, drama, music, and art as so many intellectual toys to delude the unwary from the true path of proletarian rectitude.

The phenomenon is by no means new. The Puritan pioneers of the bourgeois revolution similarly made war upon stage-plays and sonnets, carnal images, daubings, frills and furbelows, delusive romances, voluptuous instruments of music and "monkish chronicles"—all to them allurements of their enemy—the Where of Babylon.

They made their garments grave in colour and cut, they cropped their heads and stripped their churches of images. They white-washed over the painted walls of cathedrals and broke the noses of all the stone saints within reach.

And in the end they established capitalism and made Lancashire and Yorkshire, the Clydeside, and the Tyne things not only possible but actual. They, too, wanted education "without frills on." For them "the Bible and the Bible only, was the religion of God," and whatsoever was more than this was an invention of the devil.

In much the same spirit our ultra-proletarian comrades (most of whom started out as intellectuals in a small way) would have us "get down to" the "practical work" of "organising the revolution," and whatsoever is more than this is, to them, a waste of time if it be not plain desertion. A little history, provided it be "industrial," a great deal of economics, and then politics *ad infinitum* such is their prescription for the intensive culture of good class consciousness.

To all which there is a plain answer.

Even on "practical" grounds it will be admitted that a revolutionary crisis does not arise from nothing. Only a bourgeois ideologue imagines that a proletarian movement originates in the superheated brain of an evilly-disposed agitator, and spreads as far as its "idea" can be communicated from brain to brain. Before a revolutionary crisis arises a whole social process has to be gone through and while it finally culminates in a clash of ideas, programmes, policies and counter-policies, its roots lie in the living reality of men, their organised inter-relationship and the strains and stresses to which these are subjected by natural growth of human society. The Fatalist who says that Action makes no difference is met equally, but no more, by the Man of Action pure and simple, who says that Action is everything and Thought nothing.

We transcend both and their feuds when we see the plain truth that the Thought itself is a Deed, and as such fraught with fruitful possibilities.

The new PLEBS Textbook gives a good example. "What," says your Practical Person (in an ultra-proletarian mood) "does it matter to the working class how Capitalism grew up?—what we want to know is how to shift it."

To which the answer, of course, is "Try!"—and in your very trying you will learn that to shift Capitalism out of history you must first learn how it got there. Only when you thoroughly comprehend the nature of a thing are you in a position to begin to change it; only when the necessary means are available can the change begin.

To me no study is more practically urgent, more immediately indispensable, than the study of history. Economics, politics, industry and social organisation—each and all of these can be understood only in the light of their historical development. And only when understood as parts of a developing whole can they become instruments for the production of results.

The end and aim of all PLEBS endeavour is the cultivation of a proletarian class-consciousness sufficiently developed and classified to find expression in a proletarian class-struggle daily growing nearer the hour of triumph.

It involves the development of spontaneous class-instinct into conscious and deliberate class-understanding. How can this be done unless the proletariat in mass become convinced that Capitalism not only is not the only conceivable order of society but had a definite beginning and therefore must have a definite end.

This textbook is planned expressly to meet that need. "European" History for its purposes is that of Capitalism, its origin, its rise, triumph and decline; with, as part of the process of its decline, the origin, development, culmination and (in Russia) triumph of the proletarian revolution for which it serves as a historical preparation.

Naturally a large part of the book is taken up with the Birth of the Bourgeois State. Even so, these sections could have been expanded with profit. Russian experience has shown how far-reaching and complex are the problems of social reconstruction that press in a crowd for solution immediately upon the heels of a triumphant revolution. It gives these problems and the mode of their solution a far finer chance of proper appraisal if they are taken in their proper perspective with the parallel problems and solutions of the bourgeois revolutions in Germany, Britain, France and America, as a background.

The essential character of the proletarian class struggle itself is even more fully illuminated by this historical treatment than is the revolution.

It is in history, for instance, handled as this is, that we get exposed—as is possible by no other method—the miserable myth of "racial individualities." When we know how the great modern States have been carved out of the complicated heterogeneity of mediævalism we can best appraise the shallow hypocrisy of the bourgeois "race" theory of national demarcation.

History, especially Modern History, with its record of how every geographical and traditional isolation has fallen before the grinding glacier-like advance of Capitalism, is the surest and most certain demonstration of the scientific soundness of our internationalist faith.

In many respects this textbook is not merely useful, but refreshingly opportune.

Now that the British bourgeoisie, like an old sinner, feels the aches and pains of conscience in every joint—and accordingly turns and rends the least protected thing in sight, it is more than useful to be reminded in a vividly written narrative how it, too, in its historical youth, had its day of idealism and revolutionary enthusiasm.

And still more useful, too, to be reminded how on the heels of every revolutionary uprising of the bourgeoisie against Feudalism came a proletarian endeavour to complete the revolution in a proletarian sense.

From the Anabaptists to the Bolsheviks is a far cry, but it is as pure and straight a line of descent as that from Cæsar Borgia to Sir William Joynson Hicks. Those who denounce the Communists for their blasphemies may be even more disconcerted than they at discovering the place in their pedigree of the men who fought under the slogan, "No king but Jesus."

And when all tales are told and the last records summed, the story of the workers' struggle and its pioneers, of Ball and Tyler, of Babeuf and Blanqui, of Marx and Lenin, Leibknecht and Luxemburg, will give a record of courage and gallantry sufficient to redeem even the blood-soaked and crime-saturated story of capitalism from the oblivion its horrors so richly deserve.

The Plebs League has done the workers' movement one more signal service.

T. A. JACKSON.

## PLEASE !

*Will class-secretaries, literature secretaries, and all PLEBS supporters do their bit towards facilitating our work by paying their accounts as promptly as possible, and by refraining from asking or expecting long credit. We can pay our way, if our friends will always pay us. We don't need to appeal for donations if our friends will see to it that we're not worried about debts.*

## PLEBS QUERIES

## Has the I.L.P. a Future?

*The PLEBS badge being a question-mark, we propose in this series of articles to ask—and in some measure to answer—certain pertinent questions about the workers' movement and the immediate problems confronting it. Last month, J. L. Gray raised the question at the head of this article. Below, Philips Price replies to Gray.*

**I** READ J. L. Gray's article in the October issue of *The PLEBS* with much interest. It contains a great many home truths about the I.L.P., and it is as well that in times like these there should be frank speaking. But even if all his accusations against the I.L.P. are accepted, I am confident that his conclusions are unsound. The impression left on my mind after reading his article is that he is advising us to do what the Chinaman in Charles Lamb's story did, when he burnt down his house in order to roast his pig. Now Gray must permit me and others, who, I think, will agree with me, to refrain from such a drastic method of obtaining our political ends at any rate at the present time.

I am going to assume that all this is true about the I.L.P., and that the problem before us is to sever a militant Left Wing in both Scotland and England from the official I.L.P. element and from the interests round the party machine. I am going to suggest that it would be disastrous to go in for that operation now. It would only be a repetition of the folly of the Communists, who called upon the trade unions in 1920 to leave the Amsterdam International, because it was "yellow," and in the same breath called upon the members of these same unions to remain in their organisations and to change the leadership. If it was sound policy to change the leadership of the national unions, one would have thought that the same policy could have been followed for the international organisation. But by creating a rival Red International, they rallied all the elements who would otherwise have formed an opposition in Amsterdam, in support of the reactionary elements there. And I venture to suggest that the same thing would occur, if an attempt were made to split the I.L.P. In general it may be said that splits only result in handing over the whole of the propaganda apparatus to the very people against whom the split is supposed to operate. And the Communist International in its illogical way recognises this, when it tries to keep Communists inside the mass parties.

On the other hand splits may be necessary sometimes. But the only splits in political parties that have been successful, as far

as I can remember, were those that took place in the heat of the war crisis in Germany and of the revolution in Russia. In the acute situation resulting from the surrender of the German Social-Democratic leaders to the military machine during the war, the breaking away of all anti-war elements under the flag of the Independent Socialist Party was justified by the results. But it would have been folly to have made this split in 1913. Again, the severance of the Bolshevik from the Menshevik organisations in Russia took place on the wave of revolutionary crisis. It would have been disastrous for the Bolsheviks to have made the split, say, in 1906, as many wanted to do, but were prevented from doing by Lenin. They would merely have handed over the party apparatus to the Menshevik section of the Russian Social-Democrats. Similarly, the split in the Russian Socialist Revolutionaries took place a few weeks after the October Revolution, when the question was acute:— On which side of the barricades is the party going to fight? It was not acute before that time and it is not acute in England to-day. The I.L.P. has not got to decide at once what is going to be its attitude towards a general strike which has the sanction of the General Council. When such a situation arises, there may very likely be a cleavage of opinion in the I.L.P. of so serious a nature that existence inside the same party organisation for the Right and Left Wings will become impossible.

In a word splits made to order are folly; but splits arising spontaneously out of an acute phase of the class struggle are often necessary and imperative.

So much for the tactical-political side of this I.L.P. question. But are the premises correct on which the argument is built for delivering over the party machine of the I.L.P. to the Right Wing. With the classification of the various elements in the I.L.P. I am in agreement with Comrade Gray. There are firstly, as in every party which has been in existence for some years, including the Russian Communist Party, the professional politicians and the party bosses. Then there is the special Anglo-Saxon product—the Christian pacifist. Finally there are the Left-Wing elements that either by study or by instinct understand something of Marxian dialectics. Comrade Gray doubts whether “such a body can be transformed quickly to meet the new problems that confront us with any hope of overcoming them.” If by this is meant that these elements cannot become the spearhead of the movement in a great industrial crisis, I will agree. It is true, as he says further on, that “the I.L.P., as such, is completely out of touch with the trade unions.” The I.L.P. was the spearhead of the movement in the 90’s, when the trade unions were in coalition with the Liberals doing important work, which had to be done in those days to prepare

the ground for our present day problems. So to-day the spear-head of the movement is being forged by the advanced wing of the trade unions, while the I.L.P. is doing work in the more backward areas of the country and is providing a very useful bridge across which the intellectuals, the technicians, engineers, doctors and members of the civil service and free professions can reach the Socialist movement. And if anybody imagines that we are going to run a Socialist state in this highly industrial country without the majority of these sections of the headworkers at least benevolently neutral and a minority actively sympathetic, he had better stop and think a minute before plunging the movement into disaster. We cannot afford to ignore these elements and we cannot win them over with the bludgeon. And I say, therefore, that the I.L.P. is doing yeoman service to the movement, although it is not the old service which it performed in the 90's at the street corners, by making these much despised but indispensable intellectuals acquainted with the Socialist outlook, so that the transition stage may be less painful than it was in Russia. Not that the Bolsheviki are to blame for the painful process in the Russian Revolution caused by the sabotage of the intellectuals. They could not help themselves, but that is another story. It is, however, our duty to avoid these dangers when we can, and the I.L.P. is in this respect doing useful and quiet work.

Moreover it is not divorced from street-corner work. True, it does not seem to carry the same inspiration in the big industrial centres as it did twenty years ago, because the initiative in many places has gone to various bodies, like the individual members' section of the Labour Party, the Trades Council, the trade union branches or whatever happens to be the ginger group in the particular locality. But in the rural areas or in the small provincial towns where the Labour movement is only a few years old and not yet on its feet, the I.L.P. still performs the functions that it performed twenty years ago. And I can assure Comrade Gray that this work is still very necessary. The rural districts and the small provincial towns in the South and West of England are years behind the industrial centres of the Midlands and the North, and it is impossible to do anything practical either in Parliament or by industrial action until these districts have at least a minority supporting Labour. We have not even got that now, and it is well to bear this in mind, before assuming that the working classes of this country are ripe for the barricades. Not half the workers of the country are in trade unions yet, and those that are are not all Labour. Gray is rather too much inclined to assume that we are "soon going to be engaged in a life-and-death struggle with an unscrupulous capitalist class and its Fascist gun-men." I heard just that sort of language

for nearly four years in Germany. The Revolution would take place at 9.0 a.m. on Tuesday next, weather permitting. But even in Germany with its bourgeoisie demoralised by inflation it did not come off; and when abortive attempts were made, it was found that the working classes met each other on different sides of the barricades. The consciousness of the necessity for Socialism was only strong in some of the big industrial centres. The provincial towns and the large rural areas were very little affected. I think the position is not very different in England to-day and I, therefore, utter a word of warning against these all too optimistic estimates of the situation.

Under these circumstances it is very important to have a body like the I.L.P. to continue the work of breaking new ground, particularly in the backward areas.

Lastly, I would point out that the official organ of the I.L.P., the *New Leader*, has done in the last two years a good deal of hard thinking. It may be too high-browed for the rank and file, but it is just the sort of stuff that the new recruit from the intelligentsia wants. Moreover, even among the rank and file in this country there is a strong desire to have some practical alternative to capitalism. Contrary to the continental movements the workers in England tend to be drawn to the Labour movement because they are seeking for practical alternatives. The I.L.P. were the first to approach the agricultural problem in this country from a practical standpoint and to discard the phrases of old Radical days. The articles in the *New Leader* about two years ago pointing the way to the stabilisation of prices and to public control of land by County Committees was the first Socialist contribution to the modern land problem in this country.

I am not singing pæans to the I.L.P. I recognise its weaknesses and failings, as does Gray. But I am not in favour, as he apparently is, of scrapping the implement because it is not doing the same work as it did when it was first used.

M. PHILIPS PRICE.

# NINTH NOVEMBER NEW TEXTBOOK

Literature Secretaries should see that there is a good display of the book in every N.C.L.C. class this month.



## The PLACE of LITERATURE in WORKERS' EDUCATION

*The place of Literature and other "cultural" subjects in the curriculum of our classes was keenly discussed at the Plebs Meet in September last. We here reprint an address delivered by H. W. L. Dana, of the Boston T.U. College, at the 2nd Annual Conference of Worker-Educationalists held at Brookwood, New York, last February. We think Plebs will agree that it is a thought-provoking contribution to the discussion of the subject.*

“**W**HAT'S the use of literature?” One hears the question raised on all sides. Not long ago, a six year old schoolgirl, troubled with a loose tooth, was asked to write a composition on “Literature” and produced this effusion :

“Literature, Literature, what's the use ?  
You don't help me loosen my tooth !”

A similar stimulating query was put to me the other day at the end of a long lecture when a taciturn old man in the audience got up and asked, “What good is literature anyway ?” The chairman apologised to me later for the bluntness of the question. But it is just such devastating questions as these that I like. They get to the heart of the matter and challenge us to show cause why literature, if it does not help to loosen the young girl's tooth or the old man's tongue, does at least help to loosen something, to set something free.

Accordingly, when we come to the problem of the place of literature (and with literature of other cultural subjects such as art and music) in our present efforts towards mass education of the workers, I am going to imagine that you have asked a series of equally devastating questions :

1. *Aren't cultural courses a luxury we can't afford ?*
2. *Can't they be studied better elsewhere ?*
3. *Don't they tend to be reactionary ?*

Frankly, I think these three questions are all well taken and yet I think they can all be answered. Let us take them up in detail and see what can be said in reply.

1. *In the first place, you may say literature, art, music, etc., are all very well in their place, but in the present state of workers' education, are there not more important things that should be studied first? Would not these cultural courses distract from the essential economic ones? You may quote the first sentence from the report of our last year's teachers' conference here at Brookwood: "The Social Sciences constitute the basis of Workers' Education"; and argue that we should seek first the kingdom of social sciences and then when that has been firmly established, all these things—art, music, literature, etc.—can be added unto us. At present, you may ask, are not these cultural studies luxuries for which we cannot afford to spend any of our scanty resources?*

To this, I should reply, that it would indeed be a shame to take the money from the economic courses and spend it on purely cultural ones, and that cultural courses would only justify themselves in mass education when they were financially an asset and not a liability. As a matter of fact, in many Trade Union Colleges supported by fees it has been precisely the fees from the literature courses which have helped support the economic courses. It is then often not a question whether you can afford the literature courses, but whether you can afford to run your colleges without them. Not only this, but sometimes students, at first seeking mere relaxation from work, may enrol in a literature course and later when they have become interested in the college take up economics and other subjects. The cultural subjects, then, instead of distracting from other courses may attract students to them. The literature course, in other words, may serve as sort of bally-hoo in front of the circus to draw the crowd into the big tent. It is a part of the "jazz method" of building up the college enrolment. Those who come for literature may remain for economics, and the cultural courses thus serve not merely as "cracker-jack" to offset the more meaty matter of more essential courses, but they may serve as "feeders" to help fill up the other courses.

2. *In the second place, you may ask, can't these cultural courses be studied equally well elsewhere—in University extension courses, in Night Schools, in Y. M. C. A.s, etc.? Workers' education, you may feel, should concentrate on those subjects which are not fairly taught elsewhere, subjects such as economics, politics, history of the labour movement, subjects which our "Goose-Step" colleges ignore or else teach with a prejudice against labour. Is it not a wasteful reduplication for us to give in our workers' colleges courses in literature in which there is no similar prejudice?*

This I should answer by pointing out that even in the field of literature there is a similar prejudice in our colleges against the point of view of the workers and that in the teaching of literature courses

we need an entirely new approach to the old material. Our rich-trustee-run universities have taught art, literature, music, etc. as pleasant accomplishments to be appreciated by the leisure classes—what Sinclair would call “Mammonart.” What H. G. Wells described as the attitude of Harvard is all too typical: “They act as though all the thinking in the world had been done and as though their business were merely to collect the souvenirs.” No wonder they do not encourage a “47 Workshop” that would venture to create new plays and ask instead for five million dollars for a Business School. If an appeal is made for fine arts it is made clear that it is to be for the training of curators and connoisseurs to help the rich in their fad of collecting—not to make artists. Culture, then, is in danger of becoming the handmaiden of “Big Biz,” and the creative element ignored. Not only that, but the new approach to the study of the history of art and literature—that of studying their social significance—is frowned upon. At a recent joint conference of British and American teachers of English Literature, Professor Root of Princeton expressed horror at this new tendency to lay emphasis on “the social forces in literature.” To be sure Professor Vida Scudder and Robert Morss Lovett “pointed with pride,” at what he had “viewed with alarm.” Yet it is not in our orthodox colleges, but in workers’ classes that the study of the sociological trend of literature and art is being worked out. The whole history of literature needs to be rewritten. It needs to be told not from the point of view of the idle rich but from that of the great masses of humanity, from the working classes. One further important difference remains to be pointed out and that is that our regular college courses almost always take up literature from a national point of view: English Literature, American Literature, or whatever it may be. And even when foreign literatures are studied there is almost an inevitable tendency for the French Professor to try to show the superiority of French culture over German and of the German Professor to show the superiority of German culture over French—instead of showing how each helpfully supplements the other and how much we need the stimulus of both. In workers’ classes, with students representing many different nationalities gathered together, there is a splendid opportunity to study the history of culture internationally without patriotic prejudice. It is then I think becoming increasingly difficult to find literature or art taught in our ordinary college courses with a proper understanding of their relation to social history, with the point of view of the common people in mind, or with a genuinely international scope. It is accordingly the great opportunity of our labour colleges to supply here once more what our capitalist educators are failing to give us.

3. Finally, you may raise the question whether cultural subjects do not serve as narcotics to make us forget the class struggle. Do they not tend to dull the fighting edge? Are not cultural courses "sissy" courses where we float about in a sort of dreamland and escape the duty of facing unpleasant realities? Isn't literature an ivory tower where we can get away from life? Isn't culture itself often a basis of snobbish class distinction whereby the so-called "cultured classes" look down in scorn on the rank and file as though they were the "rank and file", and speak of the "education of the masses" as though it were "the education of them asses"? At best isn't culture one of the thinnest veneers ever spread over mankind? Isn't the schoolboy's definition of it right: "Culture is what we remember when we have forgotten what we know"? Most important of all, does not culture, by the very fact that it is based on the traditions of the past, tend to strengthen the forces of convention, of tradition, of reaction, and tend to be opposed to all that is new, progressive, revolutionary?

To this, I should finally answer that culture of this "girls' finishing school" variety may well have no place in our programme for workers' education, but this merely shows all the more need for an entirely fresh conception of culture. We should study literature not as a mere pleasant "pipe-dream", not as an escape from life, but as an interpretation of life—a means of understanding reality more fully through the power of sympathetic imagination. Art and literature, instead of being the basis of bourgeois snobbishness, can be the basis of a genuine proletarian culture—what Eden and Cedar Paul call in their book a "Proletcult." An interesting distinction between the point of view of the bourgeois and the proletariat towards art is made by that proletarian Danish writer, Nexö, the author of *Pelle the Conqueror*. He says: "A proletarian is a man whose spiritual standard of living is higher than his material standard of living; a bourgeois is the opposite, namely a man whose material standard of living is higher than his spiritual." He adds that the traditional view of art is a bourgeois conception which we must try to get rid of. When, then, art and literature are studied not as an idle pastime, but as an expression of great social forces that have been moving throughout history they certainly should have an important place in workers' education. Literature, showing up through its realism what is wrong with the world and holding up in its idealism the Utopia of a better world, far from being reactionary, is essentially revolutionary, essentially an appeal for social change, "A Cry for Justice." All great literature, all great drama, was at the time it was written revolutionary in one way or another.

"Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,  
Burns, Shelley, were with us, they watch from the grave."

This perhaps is one reason why the timid college professor fights shy of the social implications of some authors and lays stress on the technique. The regular college textbooks seem devised to blind the student to the revolutionary import of the substance by turning their attention away to the mere style. In the *Century Readings in English Literature* we are carefully forewarned: "Shelley's poetry has little intellectual content. . . . We do not learn anything from Shelley." Another textbook called *The Great Tradition*, pigeon-holes Shelley in a chapter called *The Failure of Revolution*. Of the great champion of intellectual liberty who has died so recently in France, the director of the Columbia School of Journalism assures us that the next generation, while acknowledging Anatole France's supreme mastery of language as a means of expression, will reject his views as containing nothing to satisfy the spirit of youth. In the survey courses in literature, the whole trend from the aristocratic through the bourgeois towards the people is cautiously obscured. For that same reason contemporary literature is either ignored or else only the most conservative writers stressed. The communist tendencies of Gorki in Russia, of Nexö in Denmark, of Capek in Czecho-Slovakia, of Ernst Toller in Germany, are kept out of the picture. It seems almost as though William James' characterisations were true: "The natural enemy of every subject is the professor thereof," and as if the chief obstacles to learning were our universities. It is only by a fresh approach in our labour classes to the study of the social forces in literature that we can catch the fervour of rebellion, the beauty of revolt lying at the heart of all literature and so be in a better position to fully appreciate the style itself. Those of us who talk of the coming social revolution are perhaps not sufficiently aware of the revolution of the mind which is already going on in our literature—a revolution of the mind without which the external political revolution would have no firm foundation. Karl Marx is right: "The idea becomes power when it reaches the masses"; and literature making the abstractions of our economics and sociology concrete and intelligible, and adding to them the moving force of emotion is one of the most powerful ways in which the idea reaches the masses. With such a study of literature comes the contagion that fills the student with the desire himself to be a creator. The little schoolgirl who wrote:

"Literature, Literature, what's the use?  
You don't help me loosen my tooth"

even if her rhyme of "use" and "tooth" leaves something to be desired, was at least stimulated by a spark of revolt and in her very attack on literature was trying to create literature.

H. W. L. DANA.

## ON SELLING "PLEBS"

By "The M.S.M."

*We make no apology for devoting some space this month to ourselves—and our circulation. We want that 10,000. What about it? This article is by a North Country Pleb who has done, in his own district, what he here asks others to go and do. If you want to ask him further questions, write him, c/o PLEBS Office. And don't wait for somebody else to take the initiative in your area—start in yourself.*

"IT'S all right the Editor talking about selling more PLEBS, but how the devil is it to be done? If he'd come and try in our district he'd damn soon find out what we're up against."

Surely the man who can make remarks similar to this must never have had a square meal in his stomach this side the War. Though, on second thoughts, maybe he is only suffering from lack of business experience. In any case we must try to help him.

*On Getting Orders*

In selling anything, naturally one must never be offensive, cool or uninterested. If you are in that state of mind, which perhaps comes to all of us at times, and feel you don't care vastly whether your man buys the thing or not, don't offer it to him—you are only doing us harm. Go to the pictures until you recover.

Assuming you really want to sell, then engage somebody in conversation. Find out what the chap likes—football, billiards or what not and then get him to talk about it; but—be sure to *listen*. Keep your own likes and dislikes in the background.

Whether his fancy be yours or not, for the moment *you must be really interested*. Say only just sufficient to keep him going until you think he is tiring but not actually tired, otherwise you will lose him. It is great sport. Something like tiring a fish before landing it, though with the difference that you do your fish a good turn—not in the frying-pan either. Viewed as a game it has "Shell out" or Bridge beaten as flat as gold leaf.

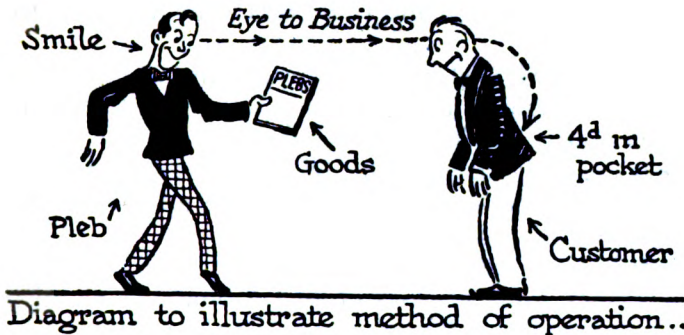
When he has worked off most of his spare wind, then is the time to introduce your own particular fancy.

Supposing football to be the subject, you might refer to the contrast between wages paid to footballers, and the dole paid to people who want to work all the week if they could only get it to do. This will lead from thoughts of football to consideration of present economic questions and the need for printed matter to teach people the truth.

Meanwhile you have been toying with a rolled up copy of the Mag. in your hands. And as a kind of afterthought you now show it to him as being the best thing of its kind you have come across so far in relation to the question just raised.

For the time being let him feel you are a pal, and eventually you will smile fourpence out of him for the current number. Tell him if he likes it you will see that he gets supplied regularly, just by way of doing him a good turn. Get his name and address so that in case of need you can "follow on" with an advertising circular.

There is still another aspect, for just as you must never offend, neither must you ever be offended.



Your job is to sell PLEBS. Now if you allow yourself to be turned away by a rude remark, then you don't do your job. You lose both points in the game for you don't even make a draw.

A Pleb who can't stand being laughed at should book his seat for the revolution and then get from under our feet and go to bed. He's no good to us.

Always remember the old commercial traveller who had it to his credit that during his thirty years' experience of selling goods, he had been ordered out, kicked downstairs, spat on, and many other things besides, but "had never once been insulted." That's the sort of fellow to do business and pull orders.

Every Pleb or PLEBS reader in the country—girl, boy, woman or man—can get orders in these or any other ways that suit. It requires only the will and a little—very little—effort.

You need not directly ask your customer to buy, but rather suggest that he should do so. And at the moment of suggesting don't look away but smile right in his eyes *and feel that he is just about to give you the money.*

Whatever method be employed, the essential feature is to establish a bond of sympathy between him and you. It is that "human touch" that does the trick.

*On Organising Distribution*

When orders have been secured it becomes somebody's job to see they are executed.

Each Plebs group in each district should create a new official to be called the Magazine Sales Manager (later, you may call him by other names if he doesn't do the job). For short we will call him the M. S. M.

Do not appoint anybody already busy, say, with lecturing, organising, writing, secretarial work, etc.—not even the Literature Secretary, for if these people do their work properly they have enough on hand.

Since most folk who should call for their PLEBS every month, very often forget—particularly during the summer—then our only remedy is to take it to them and stand on the doorstep till we get the money.

Accordingly the M.S.M. should consider the whole of his district, map it out into divisions and get some pals to undertake to deliver the Magazines, each in his own division.

All orders could be sent to the M.S.M., who would receive the bulk parcel from London, check it and make up the smaller parcels required by each divisional distributor.

Each distributor must be supplied with a little penny book containing the names and addresses of all customers in his district, and with ruled columns for each month opposite the names.

In this he would enter the amount paid in the proper column against each name, thus showing at a glance amounts received, and amounts owing (in case there are any). When the distributor brings his money in the M.S.M. should write a receipt at the foot of the column for the amount received.

The M.S.M. could keep a threepenny exercise book as his directory and ledger. Taking a double page (to allow for additions) he could enter the names and addresses of all customers in No. 1 division. On another double page he could do the same with those of No. 2 division, and so on.

At the other end of the book, he could rule three columns under each distributor's name. The first column to be used for the number of magazines taken out, the second for the amount owing, and the third for the amount received when the distributor brought it in.

All small books and money should be brought in by the 13th of the month to enable the M.S.M. to make up his order for central office by the 15th—thus giving the centre an idea of how many to print.

The separate books make it possible to replace a man should he be ill. These books which are taken out with each parcel, should be left in at the time of bringing the money so that the M.S.M. can correct his lists if needed, say through orders being cancelled or



new ones being placed, and so be able to make up correct parcels for next month.

Never overwork a distributor. It tends to make him give the job up. As a division grows it should be split into two and another distributor appointed.

#### *On Profits and Paying Accounts*

We give this a separate paragraph. It is important.

If the circulation in any district should be one dozen, the profit is swallowed up in postage and price of postal order.

But imagine selling 12 dozen. The profit becomes considerable. It can be saved up until the M.S.M. can *pay in advance*.

Not a penny need come out of anybody's pocket for postages, etc., or for magazines. Central office could have the use of the money, and could also save the energy now required in book-keeping and appealing to debtors to pay their accounts. This should leave the office folk time to do other things. If all would pay in advance, it would make a decided difference to the work put into the movement, without costing any more, because it would stop this particular leak of wasted energy.

As the business of each district grows, the M.S.M. should put part of the profit away as a reserve fund to cover possible bad debts, the loss of a postal order or any other unforeseen contingency.

Beyond this the profit could be used to purchase magazines to give away as advertisement. A good business man never neglects to advertise. And surely so long as it costs nobody anything the magazines had better be given away for nothing rather than let them lie at the office in London doing nothing?

Selling PLEBS is the most all-round profitable business any ordinary Pleb can do. And the great beauty of it is that no special ability is required. A PLEBS seller doesn't have to study for years like a lecturer or class teacher.

#### *On Some Other Important Matters*

Granted the foregoing, the PLEBS Directory could become a valuable Mail Order List with the machinery of distribution ready to hand. For instance in the case of pushing a new book, all it needs is a duplicated circular inserted in each copy to ensure it getting to the right people. The distributors could take orders *with cash*. Classes could be advertised in the same way with a minimum of effort and expense, and with the maximum efficiency, for again the information would get to the folk who mainly matter. Per unit of output there would be an immense saving of time and energy not only at the centre but in every locality.

Why have we not got a really efficient selling organisation? Very probably because the work of selling PLEBS has been regarded

as a wee bit—well, lowering to our dignity. Lecturers, organisers, etc., are more or less in the limelight. People look up to them (often to their embarrassment and disadvantage). But the mere seller feels on a level with the “washer-up.”

And yet is it not the Magazine that has made the Movement (taking into account the M.C.H. of course)? To be sure it is. Very well then, a Magazine Sales Manager should be—nay, is—of more importance than a mere class teacher.

It is with this idea in mind that we advise the creation of that *special office*, and that it should be filled by those who take their work seriously, and who realise that in building the movement in this way they are helping the working class towards emancipation far more effectively than the mere talkers.

All the Plebs Conferences and Meets would, speaking relatively, cut no ice alongside the work of M.S.M.s if the latter are developed as they should be and could be.

Nor should we omit to mention the immense weight an extended PLEBS would bear in the coming struggle with rival educational institutions under the T.U.C. educational schemes.

#### *On the Circulation*

Now the Editor is a good enough chap in his way. But he is far too conservative—not politically of course. He asks for a circulation of 10,000. Ye Gods! Ten thous—bah!

Will any good Pleb who claims to be in his right mind, just sit down and imagine himself offering PLEBS to a crowd of 500. Suppose he sold ONE. Would he consider that good business? He knows darned well that he'd consider it rotten.

And yet, if we sold only one for every five hundred of the adult population of Great Britain, the circulation would be over 50,000.

*Fifty thousand*, mark you, ON THE BASIS OF WHAT WE CALL ROTTEN BUSINESS. And we're asking for only 10,000. What's wrong with us? Aren't we the *progressive* people?

Can it be that we sit waiting for folk to tumble over us? Folk who don't know of our existence.

Comrades, jump to it! Get your M.S.M.s going. Go to the people, instead of letting them tread on your toes because they didn't see you.

And don't think that 50,000 can't be done, because a much higher percentage per 1000 of population *has already been done* in one or two districts by employing the method outlined here.

Get down to it, comrades. And don't need telling again. It's a waste of time, seeing the job's so simple.

---

*N.B.—The sale of textbooks can be organised and carried on in the same way as that of the Magazine. Get to it!—ED.*

# NOTES BY THE WAY

## for Students and Tutors

### *THE Edition of Marx and Engels*

**F**ROM the Marx-Engels Archiv Company, Frankfurt, we have received the prospectus of a special edition of the complete works of Marx and Engels in which will be given many hitherto unpublished letters, and documents. Riazanov is acting as the editor, and all the articles and works collected will be given a full historical setting in the forty-two thick volumes, and appear in the historical order and language of their composition. Much new light will be thrown upon the views of the founders of scientific socialism, and it would be a Godsend if an English or Esperanto edition were later made available. Marx has had to wait for the triumph of a Workers' Government for his writings to be issued in a proper form, but it has come at last.

### *Rubber*

Classes in Economic Geography will have to put a footnote into their chapter on the U.S. concerning her latest attempt to meet her one shortage of rubber. Liberia, in West Africa, according to the scheme of Mr. Firestone (the millionaire promoter of the scheme) will grow a million acres of rubber trees. The U.S. thus answers the restriction of output schemes of the British and Dutch companies, and incidentally adds West Africa to the zones of friction.

### *More Ammunition*

The L.R.D. has produced two more "Labour White Papers," dealing with "Strike-Breaking Organisations" and "The Gains of the Revolution: Workers' Conditions in Russia," for sale at 1d. each.

The first is a survey of the development of so-called "private" strike-breaking organisations and their connection with the Government's wages policy; the second a record, based on British T.U. reports, of what the Russian revolution has won, in actual conditions of life and labour, for Russian workers.

Both are of topical interest—the latter for the 8th anniversary of the Revolution—and should have a wide circulation. They can be obtained from the Labour Research Department, 162, Buckingham Palace Road, London, S.W. 1, at 9d. per dozen, 2s. 9d. for 50, post free.

### *El "Sennaciulo"*

Se ni donas multe da ideoj al malgranda homkvanto—tio estas propagando; seni donas unu ideon al granda homkvanto—tio estas agitado (Plehanov). . . Longa artikolo pri "Brita Edukado Laborista" kun foto de J. F. H. kaj de la Administranto de la N.C.L.C. aperis en "Sennacieca Revuo" en la Aŭg. N-ro. Abonontoj al "Sennaciulo" (3d. ĉiusemajne) al "Sennacieca Revuo" (4d. ĉiunonate) skribu al K'do C. W. Spiller, 13, Dewsbury Rd., N.W. 10, kiu ankaŭ bonvenos vin kiel ano de BLES (2s. ĉiujare).

### *Bonvenon al V 1*

The Workers' Esperanto Club reports a very successful year's working. It has maintained well attended meetings and classes for the last three years. On ten occasions in the last year comrades from other countries have spoken there. Discussions long and lively have ranged from Coué to Marx and from Primitive Communism to the Social Commonwealth. Evolution, Economics, Co-operation and similar subjects have also received keen attention. Doubting comrades who think Esperanto is an inadequate vehicle of thought upon these subjects should pay a visit, and all would-be Esperantists or N.C.L.C. students in search of conversational practice would be welcomed on any Saturday at 8 p.m., Minerva Cafe, 144, High Holborn, W.C.1.

*A letter from Comrade Graf, (educational director of the German Metal Workers' Union) replying to our "Note by the Way" last month on "W.E.A. Ideals in Germany" will be found in our correspondence columns.*

## LETTERS

## "PURCHASING POWER PARITY"

DEAR COMRADE,—May I ask Fred Casey to explain his objection to the "purchasing-power-parity tripe" referred to by him in his review of *A Worker Looks at Economics* in last month's PLEBS?

Yours fraternally,  
GEO. PHIPPEN.

FRED CASEY writes:—

My objection arises because I do not see how the Theory of Purchasing Power Parities is helpful either in business practice or in theoretical exposition.

In practice, the published foreign exchange lists provide all that business men require, whether the equilibrium point refers to a gold basis or not. Indeed the so-called departure from the gold basis (inflation) never was and never could be a real departure—it was so only in name.

Consequently the idea of forming a new point of equilibrium could only occur to those who do not work from a labour theory of value, or at most have the thing mixed up, and who therefore conceive of the purchasing power of money as being *entirely* relative.

However, the chief men in the business world showed their good sense by getting back to a direct expression of gold exchange values in place of the indirect one of paper which was partly nominal. In my opinion this was the only sound policy, in fact the only possible policy. For so long as the Monetary System remains, so long will the gold parity (since gold contains labour) be the only means of expressing the socially necessary labour in commodities, and nothing will be gained by merely re-naming this convenience.

Turning now to theory. If the object of theory is to explain practice, it would seem that the Theory of Purchasing Power Parities does nothing towards that end, because business is carried on and *understood* entirely without its aid.

As regards our purely theoretical class work, again it is no good because

we have first to explain the ordinary rules of foreign exchange before the student can understand the newer theory which, since it does not explain practical problems, carries with it no additional clarity.

I think the explanation of comparative price levels involves something more than a new name to express their equivalence. And since, as I see it, the old explanation based upon the social labour theory of value suffices if properly understood, the new theory in question offers no help, so it looks to me like nothing beyond a high-sounding redundancy.

Accordingly I should say our teaching would gain in clearness if it was discarded, and naturally I was glad that it was not mentioned in Starr's book.

## J. A. HOBSON ON EDUCATION UNDER CAPITALISM

DEAR COMRADE,—With reference to Com. Williams' inquiry as to the exact source of the quotation from J. A. Hobson. Personally I have been unable to locate such, but the following, taken from the same writer's *Democracy After the War* may meet the case.

"In every country the will of certain powerful men or interests is pumped down from above. . . . (p. 5) . . . the people have not got a clear understanding of what they want. It has, indeed, been a chief business of their enemies to prevent them from gathering this fruit from the tree of knowledge. . . . (p. 6) . . . How to keep the working-class education upon a safe, low level has become a serious problem for the ruling and possessing classes in every country . . . (p. 55) . . . In the world of thought and action an immense output of new thoughts, theories and experiments is continually taking place. . . . A constant selection and rejection goes on. . . . In all thoughts and actions calculated to affect vested interests of power or property these interests exercise a rigorous selection. Ideas favourable to them receive recognition and flourish, ideas unfavourable wither and perish. . . . (p. 113) . . . Where clear and important purposes animate the ruling and possessing classes, the

competition of ideas in the world of thought can never be free: the selection, rejection and combination will always be directed to the support, not of disinterested truth, but of such 'truths' as help those who control. . . (p. 115). . . . early Socialist analyses and proposals presented a powerful and various challenge to. . . capitalist control. . . . But in the struggle. . . capitalism enjoyed the immense advantage of the support of the universities. . . . Indeed, they have quite recently invented and foisted into intellectual circulation a new support for the capitalist positions, entitled 'the marginal theory of value' . . . (pp. 119-120). Bravo, Hobson!

Yet J. P. M. Millar has the effrontery to tell us in this month's PLEBS "we are bound. . . not to criticise the good faith (*i.e.*, good intentions) of" the W.E.A. Speak for yourself, J.P.M.M. says I, I did not brief you. I will, however, be generous and put in verse what I think about the W.E.A. With acknowledgments to the *Rubaiyat*.

"In its inverted role—the W.E.A.—  
Leave blunder, crawling, duped  
along its way  
Lift not thy hands to it for help—  
for it  
But impotently toles and leads  
astray."

(tole—to allure by bait.)

Fraternally Yours,  
(Mrs.) F. CAIN.

Bolton.

THE STATISTICS OF THE N.C.L.C.

The following letters have been sent to the "Highway," the organ of the W.E.A. We print them here for the convenience of Plebs who may have to reply to the "Highway's" statements and who may not see that journal\* :—

The Editor, The Highway.

SIR,—In the current issue of the Highway, the Assistant Secretary of the W.E.A. endeavours to get over the awkward facts regarding the W.E.A.'s poor position in reference to Trade Union Educational Schemes (despite its support by Bishops, Tories, Liberals, Labourists, etc.) and the rapid progress of the N.C.L.C., described in my article in the July PLEBS.

He alleges that I counted the South Wales Miners twice and so took credit for "a fictitious 150,000 members." If Mr. Lowth will look again at the article, he will find that I did nothing of the sort: the 150,000 were deducted before the total was made.

He also alleges that, by missing out the Weavers' Amalgamation, I deprived the W.E.A. of a membership of 176,000. The Weavers were omitted because careful inquiries elicited the fact that they do not have an Educational Scheme, but simply send students to a W.E.A. Summer School. We did not count them just as we did not count Unions that simply send students to an N.C.L.C. Summer School.

Mr. Lowth is apparently thirsting to supply us with statistics that we are able to supply ourselves. Will he, however, help us by stating how many thousands of students claimed by the W.E.A., are students at classes which are entirely, or for the most part, financed by Education Authorities and other public bodies, and which, strictly speaking, are not W.E.A. classes?

Yours faithfully,

J. P. M. MILLAR,  
General Secretary.

The Editor, The Highway.

SIR,—I was considerably surprised to find, in your autumn issue, some comments on a visit I paid to the London W.E.A. Summer School in July. I had understood that visit to be a purely private and unofficial function, and I should certainly have appreciated the courtesy of a hint that a reporter was present.

However, I want neither to withdraw nor modify anything I actually said. But I must protest against your implication that I admitted "a low standard of teaching" in the N.C.L.C. What I said was that it would be surprising if, with its command of highly and expensively trained University men and women, the W.E.A. did not, in the specifically technical side of teaching, compare favourably with the N.C.L.C. And I think your "eye-witness" will admit that I went on to express the view that this "technique" was a very secondary consideration as compared with the principles on which N.C.L.C. teaching is based, or the substance of that teaching. And I appealed to those

\* Only the second of these letters is printed in the current issue of the Highway.

W.E.A.ers who admitted the soundness of N.C.L.C. principles—and there appeared to be quite a few present—to come over to us and use their trained gifts on behalf of real working-class education.

I also said—and I repeat—that the N.C.L.C. still takes its stand uncompromisingly on those principles; and that only to the extent that the W.E.A. also accepts them can there be any real "co-operation" under the T.U.C. Scheme. Whether or not there be, as you suggest, a left and a right wing in the N.C.L.C., you can take it from me that this is common ground with both.

Yours fraternally,  
J. F. HORRABIN.

#### THE W.E.A. AND N.C.L.C. TUTORS

DEAR COMRADE,—R. W. Postgate, in his letter to the Plebs Meet, which was published in your last issue, writes as follows:—

"Prominent supporters of the W.E.A. boast—indeed they have boasted to me personally—that Plebs teachers are teaching for them; and that this is a regular and known thing. There is a ban on such teaching it is true; but it is claimed that in many cases it is not observed, and that the pressure of financial need has laid open the way for the W.E.A. people to revive their dearest claim—that they can supply Labour education."

It is true that the W.E.A. has offered to pay some of our lecturers for work which they do for us for nothing, but I know of only one case in which this action has been successful—the man was unemployed—and steps were taken to ensure that the particular individual concerned, unless he immediately mended his ways, would have no further opportunity of lecturing to N.C.L.C. classes.

At the present time, the Head Office of the N.C.L.C. is not aware of one Plebs or N.C.L.C. teacher who is lecturing for W.E.A. classes, but if anyone knows that this is being done, it will be a favour if particulars are sent to us at once.

It would be most unfair if, because of what certain prominent W.E.A.ers claim without any justification, it were suggested that even a minority of our

people are prepared to serve the interests of confusionism in Working-Class Education. They are not made of that stuff.

In conclusion, it is only just to the W.E.A. to say that officially they have now dropped the claim that they can supply Labour College Education.

Yours fraternally,  
J. P. M. MILLAR,  
General Secretary.

#### WHAT THEN?—REVOLUTIONARY CO-OPERATION

DEAR COMRADE,—Ellen Wilkinson's article in the September PLEBS is a frank confession that the leaders of the Labour Movement, left wing and right, have no workable plans for countering the great capitalist offensive against the workers. At present we are relying solely on the industrial and political weapons, and neglecting the purely economic one—the Co-operative Movement—which is the most potent of the three.

The Co-operative Movement is purely a weapon of attack, and is not the less effective because many of its advocates as well as many of its critics are unconsciously of its revolutionary possibilities.

Present world conditions being what they are, trades unionism, even with 100% of the workers organised, is merely a weapon of defence. It might by a general strike cause the collapse of capitalism within the narrow boundaries of this country, but it could not re-organise order out of chaos because of the intricate character of social organisation, its lack of real experience in the control and management of industry, and the inevitable blockade which would be organised against this country by other capitalist powers.

Political action, at present, is also only a means of defence—it can secure a palliation of some of the worst evils of capitalism, but whatever a Labour Government may be able to do in the remote future has little bearing on the present crisis.

What Labour needs is a weapon which while improving the economic position of the workers and placing them in a better position to continue the fight, will inflict the maximum of economic damage on their adversaries. That weapon is the Co-operative Movement.

It cannot be stated too dogmatically that all that is needed to make a revolutionary and invincible co-operative movement in this country is a mass transfer of the purchasing power of the organised working class. There is practically no limit to what co-operation can secure for us provided that before making *any* demands on the Co-operative Societies we transfer all our wages there *first*.

The above condition being observed the things that co-operation could provide for the workers *immediately* would be higher real wages, shorter hours, increase of production, a more equitable distribution of commodities, an ever-increasing control over the production and distribution of those commodities, the ever-increasing impoverishment of the capitalist competitors of the Co-operative Movement and those dependent on them (news-paper owners, financiers), as their sales of goods decreased and their overhead expenses increased.

Last but not least—what a fine school would the Co-operative Movement be for the workers to obtain the necessary technical knowledge to enable them to efficiently run their own concerns.

Yours fraternally,

T. P. KEATING.

#### THE YELLOW PRESS AND THE WORKERS

DEAR COMRADE,—Ellen Wilkinson raised an important issue in the September PLEBS when she wrote "And if a crisis comes the transport and railwaymen who are asked to give up their jobs at the call of the Trades Union Congress, will have a right to demand of the affiliated printing and journalists' unions how long they are going to print or write the poisonous propaganda of the enemy, when their comrades are out on the field."

This is an issue which must be faced, but I think we should carry the point a step further. It is not enough that we should expect a refusal to print poison during times of crisis. We have a right to ask how much longer we are to be expected to be continually employed counteracting the savagery of the Yellow Press.

It is probably true to say that over half the volume of Labour propaganda

is conducted with a view to counteracting the influence of the boss press.

Take the mining crisis as an example. For months the men's leaders had been preparing for the struggle they knew to be coming. Everybody knew trouble was brewing. As the crisis increased in intensity the whole Trade Union Movement became rapidly involved, and the capitalist press, as usual, began to ramp. Sneers ("Emperor" Cook, etc.), lies, astounding misrepresentation, were dished daily to millions of workers. Every capitalist journal contained some filthy, low lie or suggestion, against the Labour Movement and its leaders.

Who is responsible for the appearance of such stuff? Surely a tremendous responsibility rests with the trade unionists in the printing world. Has it never occurred to the printing trade unionists that to print lies, misrepresentation, sneers, against their fellow trade unionists is one of the basest forms of blacklegging? They are rightly proud of their shop organisation. It has won them many victories, and their position so far as wages are concerned is to thousands of workers an enviable one. That they can act and act swiftly we have repeatedly seen when some worker has been victimised or their agreements have not been observed.

The power is there. When will it be used to stifle liars?

Yours fraternally,

GEO. MARRIN.

#### WORKERS' EDUCATION IN GERMANY

DEAR COMRADE,—Your note on p. 398 of the October PLEBS on "*W.E.A. Ideals*" is the cause of my writing to you.

Perhaps you can use the enclosed information in your magazine, but in any case, it is of lively interest to me that you have some fresh light on the German workers' educational activities.

You have in mind in your article two articles by Dr. Cassau and Dr. Seelbach. It was rather out of place for either of these persons to put forward such views. Dr. Cassau has no standing in the working-class movement and is not directly active in the educational work. Formerly he had a position in the Woodworkers' Union as adviser in Economics, and

has now a position on the *Berliner Tageblatt* (a leading capitalist newspaper).

Now to Dr. Seelbach: there are two State Schools of Economics in Germany, one in Dusseldorf, the other the Academy at Frankfurt-on-Main. I know this one the better as I have been active there as a teacher. Both schools are strongly distrusted by the workers' organisations.

Whereas the resident socialist college of Schloss Tinz can only accommodate a fraction of the prospective scholars, for the last two years the State School of Economics in Berlin has had to close down for lack of pupils. Dusseldorf has 35—40, Frankfurt 50—60 pupils attending each course, and each course lasts from nine to twelve months.

The big trade unions hold themselves distant from this university education chiefly on account of the lack of a definite working-class outlook in these schools; for example, the Central Union of Employees has refused to send its members there.

The German Metal Workers' Union—with 900,000 members—has never backed Dusseldorf, and since last year given no support to Frankfurt.

These organisations have for some time founded their educational schemes on a class struggle basis—particularly the Metal Workers' Union. Formerly we held regular courses for officials and works councils representatives.

The expenses of those who attended were paid by the Union and full day courses, several weeks in duration were held. The subjects taught included Economics, History and Theory of the Working-class Movement, Law in relation to Workers' Organisations, Business and Technical Training, and Political Science.

We are now extending this system, having bought a former hotel to use for a college, and we are holding, in addition to the courses for officials and works councillors, courses of from six to nine months' duration for young trade union officials and teachers.

The significance and extent of this form of education can be judged by the fact that last year we spent at the Metal Workers' School of Economics the sum of £12,500.

This system is general in the organised working-class movement, *not* as given in Cassau's article and *not* as taught in the State Schools of Economics. Note, for example, the Factory Workers' course, the Shoemakers, the Berlin Trade Union School, the Firemen, etc.

In any case we *write* little about our work, we *work*—not to make penny bazaars, but fighting class-war organisations. Here, I think, we go the same way as The PLEBS.

Fraternal greetings,

G. ENGELBURT GRAF

(Educational director of the German Metal Workers' Union and teacher of Economics and Geography).

## REVIEWS

A HISTORY OF CAPITALISM  
*Capitalist Enterprise and Social Progress.*  
By Maurice Dobb (Routledge,  
12s. 6d.).

THE first section, "Analytical," of this book reveals a Dobb unknown to the pages of PLEBS. In the best University manner of a man writing with a degree to win, the author argues with shadow men and numerous orthodox economists about the *entrepreneur's* function and monopoly. Even in the Preface we are told about the "*ceteris paribus*" and the "*point d'appui*." One reviewer suggested that the book suffered because its author had one eye on the professors

and the other on the proletariat. From The PLEBS point of view, the former eye might well have been shut. But perhaps that is going too far and the possible uses of the first part, especially to our teachers, are (a) a summarising of the theories (with quotations) of past and present capitalist economists and (b) an emphasis on the present directive functions of the capitalist undertaker—*undertaker* just now for many industries in the usual English use of the word—which functions Dobb thinks the average critic of capitalism tends to overlook.

However, Part II, "Historical," because it deals with historical facts



and gives the professors a rest is much more valuable. With many additional new points, Dobb tells admirably the story of the rise of the capitalist entrepreneur in Europe. Using the guiding thread of the class struggle he unravels the tangled skein of events from the growth of the Town to the Trust. In many places this section is an expanded form of the matter in our own forthcoming European History Textbook and will be useful for reference to our students. The details concerning the pre-capitalist "free mining" groups in the Forest of Dean, Cornwall, Devon, the Mendips and elsewhere are of great interest.

The last Part, "Applied," suffers again from the audience to whom it is addressed. There is no definite lead stated as to how the economic anarchy is to be finally ended. The reader is left at the crossways of Imperialism, Collectivism, 19th Century Liberalism, Distributivism, and Communism, and the author ends by wondering "Is the pride of monopoly and the incentive of its spoils the essential stimulus to this bold adventuring spirit [of the undertaker] or could the spirit be made to thrive in a non-monopolistic régime?"

Large portions of this book are a hostage to the capitalist Universities, paid because our movement is not strong enough to give able men the freedom to write as Marx wrote when the University had thrown him out. But the historical portion entitles it to a place on our shelves.

M. S.

#### FIVE YEARS' FUTILITY

*Reconstruction: Five Years of Work by the League of Nations.* By Maurice Fanshawe (Allen and Unwin, 5s.).

The sardonic humour displayed in Mr. Fanshawe's choice of a title is well maintained throughout his quiet and detailed narrative of the proceedings of the League of Nations to date. The section on *Chemical Warfare* well illustrates his quality:—

Asked in October, 1920, for an opinion "on the question of the use of poisonous gases in war" the Permanent Armaments Commission "came to the conclusion that their use was cruel. . . ." (p. 100).

"The First Assembly discussed the problem, with no definite result. The Second Assembly, however, in 1921 . . . requested the Temporary Mixed Commission to consider whether an appeal should be made to the scientific men of the world to publish all their discoveries in poison gas and such subjects . . . The Temporary Mixed Commission consulted the Committee on Intellectual Co-operation, who, however, turned down the suggestion for technical reasons. . . . Nevertheless, the Temporary Mixed Commission persisted in its examination of the subject. . . . The inquiry took two years." (p. 101).

"The Fifth Assembly, on September 27th, 1924, adopted this Report on Chemical Warfare. . . . and recommended that Public Opinion [capitals Mr. Fanshawe's] should concentrate on removing the causes of war by pacific settlements, so that nations would no longer be tempted to use their scientific and economic power as weapons of war." (p. 102).

Other parts of the book are just as good!  
W. T. C.

A STUDY IN SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY  
*The Neuroses of Nations.* C. E. Playne (Allen and Unwin, 16s.).

One reader at least approached this book, with its somewhat forbidding bulk and title, in fear and trembling—only to find, before reading very far, that it forms a most interesting contribution to social psychology, the social psychology of the last phase of capitalism.

To the Marxist, the disastrous effects of the modern productive process on the nervous system of the machine-minder, is, generally, very obvious: though this is a matter which has not yet received adequate treatment. Miss Playne recognises very clearly how certain social aspects of the worker's life make for severe nervous tension. The fear and the fact of unemployment are the most obvious of all. Among the rich also, the twentieth century saw the advent of new conditions which clearly menaced the former apparent security. "A certain hollowness in the credit system rang through the mighty edifice built upon it. The rich half-realised the uncertainties of even gilt-edged investments." To these social conditions, our author adds the effect

of Darwinism, which in her opinion often led to the exaltation of the animal side of man's nature to the exclusion of the whole subsequent cultural evolution. But what is especially emphasised is the swift march of events, the complicated conditions of modern existence and the increasing strain of life, to which man's nervous system failed to adapt itself. The conclusion of the whole matter, from the author's standpoint, has been that "out of this failure of adjustment arose nervous excitement, nervous depression, general irritation, resulting in anger and passion. Primitive passions burst forth accompanied by emotions of instinctive type." The culmination was the outbreak and "madness" of the Great War.

The body of the present volume (a succeeding one dealing with the neuroses of England is promised) discusses in detail the mental condition of the statesmen, the leaders of thought and the mass of people in Germany and France before the War. A great mass of material is here brought together drawn from the writings, speeches and behaviour of the two peoples. With some of that which relates to Germany our own war-propaganda made us familiar; but the revelations of the French mentality (all drawn from French sources) will be new and instructive to most readers. This forms a very clear and penetrating study of the growth of militarist sentiment corresponding to the growth of Imperialist policy and of armaments.

The casual connection in which our author views the neuroses of nations and the social conditions and maladies is not always clear or consistent; but in spite of this, Marxists will find in her work valuable materials for the study of a social psychology which is rooted in the period of Imperialism and of declining capitalism.

T. A.

A PHILOSOPHER IN A FOG  
*The Philosophy of Labour.* By C. Delisle Burns (Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 3s. 6d.).

This book attempts to enunciate a philosophy of labour based on the point of view of manual workers. The author states that he trusts his readers will not think of the doctrines of Marx or Mill, but of the experience of workers in factories and mines, on roads and

railways, with whom he has presumably conversed. The result is a tissue of sociological absurdities, vulgar economics, garbled history, and platitudinous arguments.

In order to interpret what is meant by labour he reviews the civilizations of Greece, of Rome, of Feudalism and of Capitalism. The institution of different forms of servile labour, and its economic effect upon these widely divergent forms of society, is overlooked. Neither does the author refer to the workers' point of view as expressed in primitive Christianity; in Spartacus revolts; in mediæval peasant rebellions; in Sansculotte-terrorism or machine breaking; in Chartist riots, strikes and insurrectionary manifestoes; in the Paris Commune; in modern industrial upheavals; and finally and triumphantly in the Russian Workers' revolution. Instead the reader is served with platitudes on labour as expressed in temples, churches, etc. Class struggles are kept out of the picture. In the Middle Ages, we are told, "folk-dances, folk-music and common holidays united all classes."

In a chapter on "Freedom" Mr. Burns declares that the analysis of the actual experience of the workers in their workaday lives will provide the principles of social transformation.

"It is not by understanding Capitalism, but by understanding labour that the limitations and defects of existing civilization will be destroyed."

Discussing parliamentary democracy he concludes: "that the governing factor in political life is not the system but the social atmosphere." The real problem is not to abolish the wages system but "to change the atmosphere by establishing in power not the workers as a class, but the workers' point of view."

What is this wonderful, miracle-working point of view? Summarized it is: love for manual work; the recognition of the social necessity of work; companionship with fellow-workers—"the source of the trade union spirit"; and, finally, the perception that manual labour is in its essence mental. Considering the universal murkiness of the atmosphere produced by the capitalist system this point of view stands about as much chance of changing that atmosphere as a farthing candle of lighting up the darkness of night.

Capital and wage labour are interdependent, but the interests of capitalists and wage-workers are not identical. The never ceasing struggle of the one side to gain at the expense of the other is the source of the class war. Mr. Burns, however, asserts that the workers "do not declare war" against oppression. "Indeed," says he (philosophically) "it would be foolish indeed for them to advocate war as a policy because in fact they suffer from its effects."

In Chapter VII—"Economic Obstacles to Freedom" Mr. Burns' remedy is the socialization of the *organisation* (italics mine) of industry "on the basis of public service." This can be done partially by the State, and partially "by many different possible ways of social service"—unspecified. Control of industry by the workers is advocated on the understanding that this means power to decide on hours, conditions and security of tenure by the workers, as well as a share for them in the power to fix wage rates. The system is not changed; only the atmosphere.

Mr. Burns, admitting the system restricts freedom, contends that "it is the result of certain dominant impulses and desires." Certain human beings *wished* capitalism to come upon the world stage; and, hey presto! it was produced like Dr. Faustus' wealth after he had sold his soul to the devil. Nevertheless if it was natural and inevitable that the wish fathered the system—we are not told who mothered it—it is not natural, it is not inevitable that the "dominant impulses" which produced it should continue to dominate the scene and pollute the atmosphere. Get rid of these dominating impulses, and lo, the system could be made to express the workers' viewpoint, and capitalists and workers might then live in harmony together. ¶ 4

Mr. Burns is a disciple of "gradualness." In his final chapter he dilates on "Reform and Revolution." His

definitions are not at all clear and are confused with irrelevant biological comparisons. Social Revolution is compared with falling in love or joining the Salvation Army. Social Reform is likened to the development of the individual "into manhood out of childhood by gradual and limited steps." In support of the latter statement he garbles history by asserting that the changes by which the industrial era replaced mediævalism were gradual!

In his opinion there are two classes of reform: reforms which are the causes of revolution and reforms which "are merely drugs for enduring evil." He does not, however, point out that the first class are those which result from the pressure of the workers waging the class struggle; and that the second class are palliatives designed to stave off revolution and to facilitate the smoother working of a system the economic contradictions of which create the conditions which call for reform and make for revolution.

To sum up: this "Philosophy of Labour" is not philosophy; it is sociological romance. And Mr. Burns' musings on labour are of no practical use whatever to the modern working class faced with the historic task of transforming Capitalism into Communism. SYL.

A FRENCH ECONOMICS TEXTBOOK  
*L'Economie Capitaliste*. Robert Louzon  
(Libraire du Travail, 6 fr.).

This little book is issued by a French group corresponding to our own Plebs League. It is a simply written introduction to Marxian Economics, as applied to existing conditions and developments. The book is divided into three sections, dealing respectively with exchange (the relations of individuals), with capitalist production and the relations between the classes, and with "the dialectics" of economics.

Not only is it interesting to note the general approach to the subject, but to

## THE COMMUNIST BOOKSHOP

16, King Street, Covent Garden, W.C.2.

OUR WELL-STOCKED SHELVES ARE AT YOUR DISPOSAL

WE SUPPLY EVERYTHING READABLE

Send for Catalogue

Mail Orders a Speciality

English readers the illustrations, drawn from French economic development, are also instructive. Thus the chapter on Credit gives a clear description of the different kinds of banks existing in France and their several functions, which may serve to indicate the different paths of development which Finance-Capital has pursued in the various capitalist states.

Appendices contain also charts illustrative of the course of prices, the effect of crises on price-levels, and the formation of the average rate of profit. But in such matters as the illustrative diagram—thanks to J.F.H.—we are able to give our French comrades a very considerable start.

An exchange of literature between the two movements is a welcome and encouraging sign, though, if all are to share its advantages, we shall have to develop our international language.

T. A.

#### SHORT STORIES

*Selected Czech Tales* (Oxford University Press, 2s. net).

Those of us who saw or have read the two plays by the Capek brothers, *R.U.R.* and *The Insect Play*, will be specially interested in the above little volume, giving us the chance of a wider

acquaintance with Czech literature, as well as further examples of the work of these two writers. In the simple and direct way all these stories are told we feel the influence of the peasants who kept their language alive during the centuries of Austrian suppression. The Capek's dying sailor, who is unable to understand why the impatient priest wishes him to dwell on unimportant details and incidents of his life in his last moments, when he is rejoicing in the fullness of his life—he is the only philosopher in the book. If the other vols. in this short story series are as interesting—Russian, Polish, Persian—they should be very well worth reading.

K. S.

#### COBBETT

*William Cobbett.* By G. D. H. Cole (Fabian Society, 3d.).

This little pamphlet by Cole will be welcomed by many who cannot afford the 18s. life. It is well and clearly written and gives a good bird's eye view of Cobbett's life and importance, though space has prevented the quotations one would desire. Even if your Free Library has a copy of the big life, this is worth while as a summary to keep in your own possession.

R. W. P.

## The NATIONAL COUNCIL of LABOUR COLLEGES

HEAD OFFICE—62 HANOVER STREET, EDINBURGH

*Gen. Sec., J. P. M. Millar (to whom all reports should be sent)*

**N**EXT Year's Summer School and Annual Meeting.—Next year's Summer School will be held at Cober Hill Guest House, Cloughton, near Scarborough, from 10th to 24th July, 1926. The Plebs League have agreed to co-operate in this National School, which will be the biggest gathering the I.W.C.E. Movement has ever had. The N.C.L.C. Annual Meeting and the Plebs Annual Meet will take place during the same fortnight. Book the date now; and watch for further particulars.

Chopwell, Spen and District Section of the North Eastern Labour College

has agreed to give one free Summer School scholarship to each class in its area. The scholarship will last for one week and students will pay their own travelling expenses. Other Colleges are requested to consider making similar arrangements.

*Maps and Diagrams.*—W. P. Noonan, c/o 101, Watson Street, Birkenhead, is prepared to make good-sized maps and diagrams to illustrate Economic Geography and Imperialism Courses for a nominal charge of 2s. 6d. each. We understand that his work is exceptionally good.

S. Almond, 57, Brighton Terrace,

Darwen, Lancs, is also prepared to assist in this respect. The nominal charge is the same.

*Trades Councils.*—Another Trades Council which understands the fundamentals of working-class education is the Birkenhead Trades Council and Labour Party. This body has affiliated to the Liverpool Labour College and has turned down a proposal to affiliate to the W.E.A. by 41 votes to 27.

*Women's Section, Labour Party.*—Division 8 recently issued a circular to Women's Sections of the Labour Party offering to run classes during the winter session. Similar action has already been taken by the North Eastern College. These examples should be followed throughout the country.

*A New Correspondence Course.*—A new N.C.L.C. Correspondence Course, this time on Esperanto, is now ready, the examiner being Mark Starr. All applications should be addressed to the N.C.L.C. Office. The British League of Esperanto Socialists has agreed to hand over to the N.C.L.C. any inquiries *re* Correspondence Courses. Many thanks. A course on Local Government is in preparation.

*District Conferences.*—The importance of local conferences should not be overlooked. Every district should have one at least once per year.

*Taunton and Labour.*—J. A. Sparks, an ex-Labour College Student, has been chosen as prospective Labour Candidate by the Taunton Divisional Labour Party.

*Local Affiliations.*—It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of obtaining further local affiliations this year, and all organisers, tutors and students are asked to give the matter every attention.

*What the Divisions are doing*

*Div. 1.—Essay Competition.*—An examination in essay writing will take place in March, 1926, for London students. We hope, therefore, that students will write essays during the session and in this way get ready for the contest. Book prizes, of course, will be given to the best essayists. The branches of the A.S.L.E. & F. generally meet in the mornings, and we should be very glad to arrange for lecturers to attend these meetings on various subjects or for a class to be formed. In some cases we could

manage meetings or classes in the mornings much more easily than in the evenings. If any other branches of Unions having N.C.L.C. schemes meet in the mornings the foregoing applies also to them.

*Div. 2.*—The prospects are distinctly good for this session. The principal subjects are Economics, Capital and Labour Series, Economic Geography and History of Trade Unionism. . . . New classes are starting at Farnborough, Bognor, Windsor, Ringwood and Bournemouth. Mr. John Knight, the prospective Labour candidate for Guildford Division, is taking charge of classes and is attempting to open new classes at Aldershot, Camberley and Godalming. . . . The organiser had a splendid meeting with the Farnborough A.E.U. This new class is in the hands of an old Plebeian. Fred James, the Divisional Organiser for the Agricultural Workers, is doing good work among his members by advocating the N.C.L.C. A class or two will be formed in Dorchester and District. Congratulation to Oxford N.C.L.C.ers for giving our movement such an advertisement at the beginning of this session. The appeal to Trade Unionists and printing of syllabuses is a good piece of work which should be copied by other classes in the Division. Eastleigh Labour College class still tops the list for PLEBS sales. Will any Plebeians living in or near the Division give assistance by offering some dates and subjects as soon as possible.

*Div. 3.*—A Conference was held at Southend on October 18th, with J. F. Horrabin as speaker. Slough N.U.R. has affiliated to local class. The N.C.L.C. begins at Ware with class on the British Labour Movement. The fourth commandment is violently ignored by the organiser, who travels 190 miles by road and takes three classes (Peterboro', Bedford and Hitchin) on the Sabbath owing to shift work of railwaymen and costs of separate journeys in this scattered area. One fortnightly and seventeen weekly classes are being conducted with good attendances. Norwich hopes to have a bumper meeting for A. B. Swales on November 22nd.

*Div. 4.*—Conferences have been held at Ogmore, Gilfach, Llanelly, Abergavenny, Merthyr, Barry, Chepstow,

Glynneath, Beaufort, Newport and Portakewett. Fifty-five classes have so far been arranged. Barry and District Labour College held a highly successful Conference which was attended by Div. Org. Owen.

*Div. 5.*—Newton Abbot organised a day school in September. Plymouth Labour College had a most successful mass meeting on Sunday, 20th September, with Comrades Gameson and Jennings as speakers. The College secretary and organiser Phippen succeeded in gathering together fifty of the apprentices of the A.U.B.T.W., who decided to join a class. Our thanks are due to C. S. Baston, the Secretary of the Branch. A Study Circle has been formed at Clevedon. Bristol has four classes running with others to follow. Comrade Neft, of Llanelly, gave two lectures on "Taxation and the Workers." A few places are doing their utmost to form classes for women on "The History of the Workers." Gloucester and Cheltenham have arranged big programmes, which include classes on Esperanto, Shorthand, Chairmanship, Logic and other subjects. Philips Price has promised to give an occasional lecture at these two places.

*Div. 6.*—The new organiser, Stuart Barr, has been busy surveying his Division and already a number of new classes have been formed.

*Div. 7.*—A successful Conference was held at Bradford with Messrs. Titterington, Bailey and Shaw as speakers. Conferences are to be held at Keighley, Wakefield, Barnsley and York. Over thirty-six classes are in full swing; others are being arranged. The organiser is busy with Tutors' Training Classes. Three new Colleges have been formed—Wakefield, Keighley and Barnsley.

*Div. 8.*—Liverpool Labour College has made arrangements with Garston Co-operative Society, for a twelve-lecture course on the "Co-operative Movement" to be given in the Co-operative Hall, Garston. Twenty-four classes have so far been arranged in this area for the first half of the winter session. An interested audience was addressed on 30th September in Birkenhead by J. F. Horrabin and W. T. Colyer (Labour Defence League). North Lancs Area will be commencing classes in the new following districts:—Ley-

land, Chorley and Barnoldswick. A strong local Committee has been formed in Nelson. South East Lancs Area has an extensive list of classes. The Bolton Committee has promoted an Essay Competition to create interest in their classes. A Conference was held at Rochdale, which will add materially to the effectiveness of our educational work.

*Div. 9.*—For the first time N.C.L.C. classes have been opened at Frizington, Parton and Cleator Moor. Over one hundred delegates attended the Annual Meeting of the North Eastern Labour College. Councillor W. Pearson lectured on the International School. A Conference was also held in Carlisle and a week-end school at Redcar, with W. Coxon as lecturer. A further day school is being held in Loftus in Cleveland on 7th November. Chopwell, Spen and District Section of the North Eastern Labour College have published a very attractive winter syllabus.

*Div. 10 (Scotland).*—Glasgow Labour College's Annual Propaganda Conference was attended by nearly six hundred delegates. Unfortunately the advertised speakers were not able to attend, but Comrades Maxwell and Gallacher stepped into the breach. The Report submitted to the Fife Labour College Conference by its energetic Secretary, J. F. Mitchell, showed a great improvement on the previous year's work. The Conference was chaired by P. Hodge, Secretary of the Reform Miners, and addressed by the N.C.L.C. General Secretary. Among the many tutors who have given excellent voluntary service in Fife is Comrade Birrell, who last year was responsible for seven classes, a record that will be difficult to beat. Lanarkshire Annual Conference was the best yet held, about 170 delegates being present, writes G. S. Aitken, Organiser. Aberdeen Labour College has arranged to hold classes in a new area—Stonehaven.

Ayrshire's Conference was ably addressed by R. Holder in place of A. J. Cook. The following have been appointed as lecturers for the winter: J. H. Williams (Ayrshire), W. N. Deas (Stirlingshire), D. J. Williams (Fife), D. S. Browett (Aberdeen).

*Div. 11.*—The winter session promises to be highly successful. Five well-attended classes are in full swing. The

subjects taken are Economics, Economic Geography and Irish Industrial History. Each class was opened with a Lantern Lecture on I.W.C.E. The Amalgamated Society of Painters, No. 2 Branch, the Workers' Union No. 3 Branch, and the Belfast Dock Ward Branch of the Labour Party have affiliated on the 2d. per member basis.

*Div. 12.*—About forty classes have been arranged. T. D. Smith has begun his lecture work amongst the Derbyshire Miners. Chesterfield Labour College have arranged eighteen classes. Two or three new names appear on their tutors' list. A. J. Cook, owing to doctor's orders, could not attend the Delegate Conference at Mansfield on 3rd October. The delegates filled Mansfield Town Hall on the Saturday afternoon, and in the absence of Cook were addressed by T. D. Smith in support of a resolution for I.W.C.E. The organiser replied to the debate, and the resolution was carried. For the evening a big Public Meeting had been arranged in Kirkby Market Hall; we were all disappointed that we had to go along without Cook, but the large crowd stayed for over two hours and listened to speeches by Owen Ford, T. D. Smith, Val Coleman, President of the Notts Miners, the Organiser, and Jack Smith, the Leicestershire Miners' Agent.

*Directory—Additions and Corrections*

*Div. 2.*—Cove Labour College., Sec., G. E. Axford, 12, Marrow-

brook Lane, Cove, Farnborough, Hants.

*Div. 3.*—Grays Labour College, Sec., G. Hathus, 16, Spencer Walk, Tilbury, Essex.

.. Bedford Labour College, Sec., Walter Scott, 2, Brownham Road, Bedford.

.. Slough Labour College, Sec., L. A. Elston, 45, Diamond Road, Slough, Bucks.

.. Southend Labour College, Sec., A. Killick, 17, Salisbury Avenue, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex.

*Div. 5.*—Gloucester Labour College, Sec., Miss D. E. Luker, 40, Bristol Road, Gloucester.

*Div. 6.*—Divisional Organiser, J. Stuart Barr, 35, Tonbridge Road, Erdington, Birmingham.

*Div. 7.*—Dewsbury Labour College, Sec., A. Hepworth, c/o Mrs. Holland, Sear End Cottage, Earlsheaton, Dewsbury.

*Div. 8.*—Lecturer, North East Lancs Area, A. H. Paton, c/o Clarkson, 15, Lady Place, Preston.

*Div. 9.*—Divisional Organiser, Stanley Rees, c/o R. Morgan, 2, Glenfield Terrace, Barepot, Workington, Cumberland.

*Div. 12.*—Lecturer, T. D. Smith, c/o Mrs. Wild, 6, Hunsloke Avenue, Boythorpe, Chesterfield.

## What PLEBS LEAGUERS are doing

**W**E have had several letters from group secretaries commenting on this page in last month's PLEBS, and one or two have sent in reports. We hope to give items of general interest each month, and again appeal to all comrades to send in such items.

The MANCHESTER Group has been very active, and a report from the secretary states that they intend to read and discuss the reports from other groups which will appear from time to time on this page. They are also holding a special invitation meeting to all Left Wing elements in the district in order to try out a discussion, and if possible to arrange future conferences

in order to co-ordinate Left Wing activities and also to recruit for the N.C.L.C. classes. The group has also formed a class to train I.W.C.E. propagandists. In this way it is hoped to turn out quite a number of people who will be able to win affiliations to the College and so release some of the tutors who now have to spend a good deal of time doing elementary propaganda meetings.

BLAINA Group holds weekly meetings at which a paper is read or a lecture given. The secretary asks me to extend a very hearty invitation to all who are interested. Meetings are held at the Miners' Office, Blaina, on Monday

evenings. If any comrade in the district would be willing to read a paper or lecture the secretary would be very grateful. Write to Ronald Smith, 27, Bennett Street, Brynteg, Blaina.

BRADFORD Group reports an activity that might very well be copied by other districts, namely, the getting into public libraries of The PLEBS, and further, the purchase by the Reference Library of books by Dietzgen and Morgan. The list should not stop there, for there are very many books that would not occur to the average librarian which would nevertheless be very interesting and useful reference books for working-class students.

BOLTON is booming! At Lansbury's meeting at the Spinner Hall on September 27th 1000 leaflets were distributed advertising the League and the classes. The leaflet is bright and breezy and would serve as a model if we had space to spare for it to be printed in full.

Then follows a list of classes. The whole thing is racy and readable and makes a friendly appeal. No wonder that the circulation of PLEBS goes up by leaps and bounds in Bolton.

The Newton-le-Willows Clarion Cyclists and N.C.L.C. students are holding a fellowship gathering on Saturday, November 7th, in Earlestown Labour Club. Tea at 5 p.m. Tickets 2s. 6d. The object of same is the formation of a Plebs League in the district. A cordial invitation is extended to readers of PLEBS, and all active members of local labour organisations. Harry Braddock, sec., 53, High Street, Newton-le-Willows.

Our old friend WILL LAWTHOR writes:—"With that idea expressed at the Annual Meet, of week-end schools and conferences to hammer out a policy for the movement, as well as deal with current problems, I

### PLEBS LEAGUE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

*Nominations for the 1926 E.C. of the Plebs League should be received at PLEBS Office not later than Nov. 25th. Members of the present E.C. are all eligible for re-election. Nominations for Editor and for Hon. Secretary should be received by same date. Groups and individual members are asked to accept this intimation.*

Under the heading "Another little think won't do us any harm" the following paragraph appears:—

"There are very many persons in our society who evidently do not produce any wealth but have it in abundance. In fact most of our wealth is found in the possession of persons who do not produce it. Where did they get it? The answer that suggests itself to this query is that they get it from the people who did produce it. But then the question arises, *How* did they get it? By force, or was it given them for love? For the best answer to this query we will give a prize of one of the Plebs Textbooks.

If you feel yourself incompetent to solve this problem it is a sure sign that your education has been neglected and you are cordially invited to remove such disability by attending a class."

am in hearty agreement. I think it should be a vital part of the work of our movement. It provides the best of all tonics for the students, the tutors, and everyone active in our work. If anywhere I can be of help in such conferences—as a speaker on Mining, etc.—I'm willing—for out-of-pocket ex's." (W. L.'s address is 15, South View, Highfield, Rowlands Gill, co. Durham. Make a note of it.)

Book the date now of the Big Summer School to be held next year at Cober Hill—see first par. of "National Council of Labour Colleges Notes" this month. We're going to concentrate on this one event next year, and it's going to be the biggest thing yet!

Don't forget, comrades. Send in your reports early in the month and make them as interesting as possible. Other groups will look to you for inspiration.

W. H.



## The PLEBS Bookshelf

## THOUGHTS ON BURGLARY, CAPITALISM, &amp;c.

*Murder, Piracy, and Treason : A Selection of Notable English Trials.*  
By Raymond Postgate (Jonathan Cape, 10s. 6d.).

**R**W. Postgate is a great man. He probably does not know it; and while he remains the chairman of the Plebs E.C. his comrades will (as comrades should) conspire to keep the fact from getting to his head. It remains a fact, and nothing proves it better than that he should have rescued from the obscurity of the Newgate Calendar such a priceless pearl of pure and simple sinfulness as John Richardson, the pirate, or such a wonderment of a dramatic moment as when, his "banns" being read in church, this prince of procreators was confronted with eight young women at once, each with her urgent reason why he should marry her and her alone.

Do not run away with the idea that R.W.P. has here compiled nothing but a bawdy book. There is more of the real raw material of history within the covers of this excellently printed volume than in whole shelves of dry-as-dust abstractions, generalisations and compilations. Postgate has an eye for an outstanding fact, a "nose for news" (as journalists say) plus an historic sense which enables him to see amid the pomposities and formalities of old documents just what would have been the topics of excited discussion among neighbours and cronies in days long dead. He remembers, as your over-philosophical historian is apt to forget, that history was made by real live men—and not by mere embodied abstractions. And he sees and sees rightly that to the comprehending eye the records of "crime" and criminality do more to throw light upon the actual life of the people and what law and government really meant to them at a given period

than bins of diplomatic documents and mountains of military exploits.

It is useful, for instance, to be reminded that there were such things as trials for witchcraft; that they continued till as late as 1664, and that, so far as a layman can tell, there is nothing *in law* to prevent them occurring again. The history of treason trials serves to remind us that Law is, after all, the will of a dominant class imposed by force as a rule for all.

Postgate not only gives us the story of the last trial for witchcraft. He gives as samples of "political" trials—the trial of Penn the Quaker for street preaching—with the judge's ferocious attempt to bully the jury into convicting; a trial (of "Saint's Rest" Baxter) before Judge Jeffries for "sedition"; of an American printer, one Zenger, in New York City, in 1735, for libelling the English governor—a case for ever memorable by reason of the dramatic intervention of Andrew Hamilton and his crushing defeat of a corrupt judge and a tyrannical governor; of the Cato street conspirators charged in 1820 with conspiring to capture and murder Sidmouth and Castlereagh and their leading colleagues at a Cabinet dinner—memorable again for its exposure of the government's system of spies and *agents-provocateurs*; and finally, of the Chartist rebels, Frost, Williams and Jones—of the Newport rising in 1839.

These alone would be meat enough for a full meal; but there is more still.

Worker-students with a taste for Historical Materialism cannot fail to be tempted to elucidate the plexus of class conflicts made manifest in each of these dramatic occasions. They are data for a theory of the Evolution of Revolution; they are raw materials for a comprehensive conception of Class Struggles culminating in Civil War. Their value is obvious; and

## WHAT TO READ: A Guide to Books for Worker-Students

7d. (postpaid 8d.) Per 12, 5s. 6d.

PLEBS, 162a Buckingham Palace Road, London, S.W.1.

Postgate handles them in a manner all the more stimulating in that it leaves plenty to the imagination of the reader, and so whets the appetite for further studies.

But even more fascinating, because less obvious, is the attempt to formulate a theory of the Evolution of Crime in terms of Historical Materialism from the trials of common or garden murderers, swindlers, and thieves. It is here, I think, that Postgate's gift for historical research shines at its brightest.

His book concludes with a study of the classic "criminal" of the modern period, Charles Peace. Earlier he has given accounts of murders and murderers—of the famous mystery of the death of Sir Edmund Barry Godfrey, of a sixteenth century baron who, convicted of murder (after being threatened with pressing to death for refusing to plead) was duly hanged with a "silken rope"—which as the old record judiciously observes "must have been a mighty comfort to him"; and of Thurtell, the "Regency Buck."

Peace, although hanged for murder, falls properly into a different category—that of the burglar, business-like, complete and efficient.

As Postgate says, burglary is the crime most truly typical of the capitalist system. It belongs to a drabber world than highway robbery or breaking and entering with force and arms. It is secretive, deliberate, calculated and professional. It demands special qualities and specific opportunities. Any man with the necessary anger and a weapon might become a murderer; but not every man possesses the "directive ability" or the technical competence to make a living by burglary.

It is in fact the typical crime of the respectable middle-class. Your highwayman's was after all a poor pitiful butterfly sort of a role in the human comedy. Preying, he was himself the prey of a horde of harpies of both sexes whose exploitations never ceased until after he had "kicked his heels with his neck in a rope."

Not for your burglar the glint and glamour, the moonlight, gallop, the pistol and the pursuit. Silently and with efficiency he maps out his territory with the care and concentration of a commercial traveller.

Needing a prosperous middle-class community able to keep pocketable valuables and loose cash ready for the hand of the investigating entrepreneur he is, in his private life, a pillar of the proprieties, an upholder of the Church and State. In his professional capacity, as "Charles Peace," he was, no doubt, the enemy of the law, and a menace to the security of portable possessions. But how many men are in their real workaday life all that their moral sense demands that they should be? In his private life as "Mr. John Thompson" of Peckham he is unimpeachable, a model for all around. His canaries sang as sweetly as any, he played his fiddle as well as a respectable householder can be expected to play it, and on the Sabbath none but sacred tunes vibrated from its strings. He had, to put the matter beyond all doubt—not merely a dining-room, not merely his own little sketches and paintings upon the walls, not merely (a severe test this) china ornaments in "exquisite taste"—but, and this is the acid test of suburban respectability, a *harmonium*.

The poor and semi-literate are by reason of their simple lack of sophistication generally sound in their instincts. Charles Peace has been by them singled out as one of the true great men of his century. True, he lived by robbery, which the law condemns; but the poor long since recognised that this after all was only a superficial distinction between him and the magnates of high finance and business enterprise, a distinction to be regretted perhaps but not sufficient to obliterate or even seriously to obscure his fundamental respectability.

The poor who, taught by their newspapers, shudder at the name of Bolshevism, have encouraged by the same newspapers long since accepted Charles Peace as a candidate for at least minor canonisation.

In principle the poor are right about Peace, and to this extent right about the relative merits of burglary and Bolshevism—that they are moral worlds apart.

Raymond Postgate should receive our undying gratitude for having underlined this fact in one of the most entertaining books ever written.

T. A. J.

# BOOKS FOR WORKERS

*Plebs Textbooks—*

PSYCHOLOGY  
ECONOMICS  
ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY  
EUROPEAN HISTORY

Each 150 to 160 pp., illustrated, 2s. 6d.  
(*postpaid 2s. 8d.*) Per 12, £1 6s.

*New Revised Edition—*

A WORKER LOOKS AT  
HISTORY *Mark Starr*

1s. 6d. (*postpaid 1s. 8d.*) Per 12, 15s. 9d.

*Plebs "Sixpennies"—*

TRADE UNIONISM  
CO-OPERATIVE  
MOVEMENT  
FASCISM

*We can also supply—*

A WORKER LOOKS AT ECONOMICS  
*Mark Starr (1s.)*

WORKING-CLASS EDUCATION  
*J. F. and W. Horrabin (1s.)*

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION IN  
S. WALES *Ness Edwards (2s. 6d.)*

THE TOWN LABOURER 1760—1832  
*J. L. and B. Hammond (2s.)*

PLEBS, 162a Buckingham Palace Rd., London, S.W.1



## ENERGY

ENERGY is good; energy needs direction; but, much more than that, energy needs the *right* direction.

Labour is gaining power; but power is wasted, because some Workers, who oppose the Governing Class industrially and politically, make the *fundamental mistake of co-operating with them educationally*.

Before deciding that any Educational Body is to be entrusted with Trade Union education, ask whether it receives heavy subsidies from the Capitalist State.

Consistent Trade Unionists demand *Independent Working-Class Education* (which arose out of a strike of students at Ruskin College against its University type of teaching). This Independent Education is provided by

## THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LABOUR COLLEGES

The N.C.L.C. operates the bulk of British Trade Union Educational Schemes, and provides Evening Classes, Week-end and Summer Schools, Residential Tuition, Correspondence Courses, etc. It has more Trade Union Correspondence Students than any other Working-class Educational Organisation in the World.

Send threepence in stamps for 24-page Booklet on "The N.C.L.C. and Its Work," to J. P. M. Millar, General Secretary, N.C.L.C., 62, Hanover St., Edinburgh.