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*Organ of the National  
Council of Labour Colleges*



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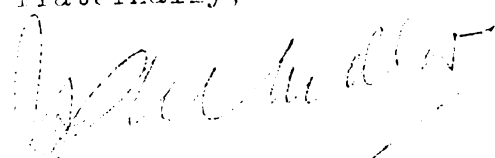
at making any theory interesting, and I suggest that you will be doing yourself a good turn if you send for a copy of the book. I can assure you that if you once start reading it you will be most unwilling to stop until you get to the end.

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As you know, the N.C.L.C. is a workers' organization and cannot afford large sums for publicity. We rely upon our students to encourage their friends to take up our classes and courses and to push our literature. If you already happen to be a regular reader of "Flebs" please pass this circular on to a friend likely to be interested.

We rely upon your help.

Yours fraternally,

  
GENERAL SECRETARY.

FILED

# THE PLEBS

Organ of the National Council of Labour Colleges

Vol. XX.

JANUARY, 1928.

No. 1

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## OUR 20<sup>th</sup> VOLUME

1909—1928

By J. F. H.

**H**ERE begins Vol. XX. of The PLEBS. To celebrate the occasion we appear in a new garb. Same cause, same principles, same convictions; but, we hope, a livelier appearance—and a wider appeal. You'll do us a favour if you'll look critically through our pages this month, and then let us know just what you think about the changes we have made.

But —

Please, while you're framing your criti-

cisms and suggestions, bear in mind the main object of those changes, to wit—the winning of a wider circulation among the students in our N.C.L.C. classes.

Don't write and tell us about those Good Old Days when The PLEBS published just what a tenth-year student of Advanced Economics needed. We should like to cater for the tenth-year student; but (a) there aren't enough of him to run a magazine for, and (b) the first-year student is at once more numerous and more important.

### Literature Secretaries—Ahoy!

More important? Yes! Because we want to win, and retain, his interest in Independent Working-Class Education. The older hands can look after themselves for a bit—most of the books are written for them anyhow. For the present, this magazine is dedicated to the Beginner.

We have accordingly to make a special appeal to class and literature secretaries to bring The PLEBS in its new form, to the notice of ALL their students. We want every student in every class to take a look at us this month. Will secretaries please make an announcement to the effect that The PLEBS is not a journal for the Select Few; but that it contains matter guaranteed to interest every man or woman who is sufficiently keen on education to attend an N.C.L.C. class.

It may even be sold outside the classes. It might possibly succeed in winning new converts. Try it.

### Note the Date.

For reasons mainly connected with convenience in printing we have changed our publishing date from the 1st to the 15th of each month. Please note this and don't start abusing us because you think you've received your copy, or parcel, late. After all there is no particular reason why, so long as it appears at regular monthly intervals, a magazine should appear on the 1st rather than on any other day of the month. We shall henceforth appear regularly—on the 15th.

### Regrets.

We have, with very real regret, to chronicle one change in connection with the magazine—the resignation of Maurice Dobb from the associate-editorship. This is due to no difference of view as to policy, but simply to the difficulty of anyone not resident in London working in close touch with N.C.L.C. Head Office. For the past twelve months the heavy end of the editorial work has been borne by Dobb, and the thanks of his colleagues, as well as of the movement in general, are due to him for his unstinted and self-sacrificing labours. He



"The Illiterate Man is a Blind Man."  
(Drawn by J.F.H. from a Russian 'Education Poster.') [See page 4]

will still, we hope, be a frequent contributor to these pages.

His successor is J. P. M. Millar; and all communications for The PLEBS should be addressed to N.C.L.C. Head Office.

### The Re-organised League.

On a later page Plebs Leaguers and friends will find a report of the discussions which have taken place as to the re-organisation of the League. The main points of the new scheme are: (1) the formation in every district of Plebs and N.C.L.C. Students' Associations; and (2) an "all-in" subscription of 5/- annually (payable, if desired, in two half-yearly instalments of 2/6) which will include subscription to the Magazine and to the League. (This subscription is payable to N.C.L.C. Head Office, 324 Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1).

Those responsible for the decision felt that the least that could be asked of every keen Pleb was that he should support the maga-

zine in the most effective way—by becoming a pre-paid subscriber. The N.C.L.C., on its side, is paying the postage costs on all copies sent out to members, and 1/- of the 5/- is handed over to the National Committee of the re-organised League as the membership subscription.

If you are registered as a Pleb you will henceforth receive your copy, postpaid, to your home address. (But you won't be registered till you've paid up.)

### A Critic—and an Invitation.

We have only just had our attention called to an article by Ernest Hunter in a recent number of the *Socialist Review* in which the following passage occurs:—

Unfortunately, many of our latter-day Socialists find precious little time for reading and thinking, and what time they do is largely wasted by the new tutors with whom they are afflicted. So-called Independent Working-Class Education is a curse to the modern Socialist and Labour movement. It produces a narrow, "groovy" mind that has little or no contribution to make to constructive

Socialism. It produces propaganda which, although it sometimes rouses a mob to passion, has no permanent effect upon the average man and woman. . . .

And much more, in the same fine, large and pontifical manner.

Mr. Hunter adduces no evidence for his root-and-branch condemnations; so that it is a little difficult to argue with him, except by the method of flat contradiction. But we welcome real criticism, and we accordingly invite him to amplify his charges in these pages, and tell us all exactly what has made him feel so bilious. So far as we can make out it's because we're "class-war merchants," whereas Mr. Hunter is keen on something called "the social conscience." Anyway, he makes certain specific accusations against a body of men and women who've worked quite as hard and as long for Socialism as he has; and numbered among them are not a few members of the same political organisation as Mr. Hunter. It's up to him to substantiate, or withdraw.

# WHAT ABOUT IT?

## *Work that needs tackling in 1928*

By J. P. M. MILLAR

**L**ET us not *drift* into the New Year! Stock-taking is essential. Slackness is as big an enemy of the workers as is apathy.

January, 1928, finds the N.C.L.C. the world's largest workers' non-State-subsidised educational body. It also finds the N.C.L.C. the principal Trade Union Educational Organisation in Great Britain. Despite these two facts the thousands of workers directly taking part in our educational work form only a tiny proportion of the workers as a whole.

The membership of the Unions with educational schemes worthy of the name represents only one in five of British Trade Unionists. There are some Unions that, without blushing, pay less than one-tenth of a penny per member per annum for

education and large numbers that pay nothing at all.

What are we going to do about it? Our principles are as sound as ever they were. We stand for independent working-class education and not some particular party's education. The latter is outside our sphere. The workers are, on the whole, easier to interest in education than ever they were. The need is greater than ever. Is each of us doing everything possible to get more students? to ensure that every Union has an N.C.L.C. Scheme? and that those of us who have some capacity for class tutoring are seriously equipping ourselves for that vital work?

### Not One Penny.

Every day demonstrates that the brains of the Governing Class realise the import-

ant part our education plays and can play in the class struggle—the struggle for “Bread and Roses.” Recent years have seen us violently attacked by the Tory Minister for Education. They have seen enormous increases in the Government’s subsidies towards W.E.A. work. One feels that the Government’s policy is that for every £ the Unions pay to the N.C.L.C., it will provide ten for the W.E.A.

The Carnegie Trust, too, has recently decided to finance additional full-time W.E.A. tutors. Most interesting of all is the effect of the Anti-Trade Union Act. Fairly interpreted, that Act does not debar Civil Service Unions from financing the N.C.L.C. or the W.E.A. But the Powers That Be have since very conveniently interpreted the Act to mean that these Unions can still finance the W.E.A., but must not send one penny to the N.C.L.C. The Tory Government knows which side its educational bread is buttered on. We wonder what the trade unionists connected with the W.E.A. think about it.

True, as our educational policy is based on a recognition of the class struggle, we must expect such opposition. Spencer Unions and W.E.A.’s exist because they have a part to play. Some workers support them for the same reason as some vote Liberal or Tory. But the job of workers’ education is up to us. We must fight—fight hard and all the time.

### The Power of the Printed Word.

Another very important aspect of our work is the selling of the magazine and of our educational books. The Plebs League publishing activities have been taken over by the N.C.L.C. Publishing Society. As a result of such factors as the General Strike and the Miners’ Lock-out, that publishing work came to the N.C.L.C. with seven or eight hundred pounds of bills to pay. Much of that money is lying in the hands of Colleges or Plebs agents. It must be paid and paid quickly. The circulation of the magazine, substantial as it is, is not nearly as big as it should be with our many thousands of students. An effort is needed on the part of our supporters to put on



“The Literate Man is often a Blind Man, too!”

several thousands of copies in two months and transform the present monthly financial loss into a gain. Are we prepared to get our backs into that job?

The publication work has been for the past eighteen months and still is running at a loss. That is ridiculous. We ought to sell three copies for every one now being sold. We are not organising the sales enough or boosting the undoubted value of the books. Even the best books do not sell themselves, and “best sellers” have themselves to be advertised. There are thousands of students who, if we liked to push our literature, would soon prefer books like “Marxism and History” to three or four packets of cigarettes.

### Efficiency Begins at Home.

Another problem is that of increasing efficiency. It is not impressive to give lectures on scientific method and workers’ control of industry unless the Colleges that provide such lectures are models of efficiency. As the educational side of the

Labour Movement, we *ought* to be more efficient than the political or industrial. We are in some areas. Are we in all? A College that boggles at a quarterly audit in place of an annual audit ought to think twice before providing any lectures on the scientific justification of workers' control.

The best types of workers—the effective types—will often not attend slackly-conducted classes. Efficiency therefore means more students, better work, more literature sales, more affiliations and fewer outstanding accounts and bad debts.

The above are some of the jobs that face us. They will test the stuff we are made of. We can all do plenty of talking in public or in private or in both. But—it's *work* that counts. If we like to make the effort we can double the number of students, double the number of Unions with schemes and

treble the sales of literature in eighteen months. Every one of us can help. It's a soldier's battle.

*We want you to subscribe something big or little to reduce the publications debt.*

*We want you to bring more students to the classes.*

*We want you to rope in the Unions that don't at present have Schemes.*

*We want you to get more local affiliations.*

*We want you to increase the sales of literature by acting as a sales' agent to the nearest College or getting literature supplies from the N.C.L.C. Office.*

If you can't find a job write and tell us. The time to help is now—a hundred years hence or much less you won't be able to help. Give the N.C.L.C. a good New Year.

# RE-BUILDING A CONTINENT

## *Impressions of Russia To-day*

By JOHN JAGGER

*President N.U.D.A.W.*

**T**HE Editor says "Write about Russia. Be bright! Be brief!" Russia occupies one-sixth of the globe. How can I be "bright" about a continent? How can I be "brief" about anything?

Still I must perforce make the attempt and resist the temptation to linger on my journey and tell you that you can send a wireless message from a Belgian ship to Ostend for ninepence; to discuss the views of my German friends about Bolsheviki; to wonder why Polish customs officers have bad manners and wear firemen's helmets, and why the Polish peasant has three cows and an acre instead of three acres and a cow.

### The Itching Palm.

Anyway, a traveller can soon tell when he gets to Russia. Passing through Belgium,

Holland, Germany, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania—in fact, whichever way you enter



*In all the countries on the way to Russia they hold out their hands to you palm upwards.*



Russia, every man you meet holds out his hand palm upwards. Immediately you cross the frontier every man you meet extends his hand thumb upwards and grasps yours in friendship.

As a matter of fact, I have not seen Russia. Indeed, I question if any man has seen Russia. You can enter a train at Niegoreloje, and travel by express train for a couple of weeks and find yourself in Vladivostok; or you can take the train at Moscow by way of Rostov-on-the-Don, detraining at Batoum, some eight days later; and then you have only seen two narrow strips of this immense country.

I suppose every country strikes a foreigner as being a country of contrasts. Russia is no exception to the rule. You have contrasts just as you have in other countries, but they are not the same contrasts. In London you have the ostentation of Park Lane to set against the squalor of Petticoat Lane. You have the Labour Hall over a stable and the Trades Council meeting in a mews.

#### Train-de-Luxe and Baggage Camel.

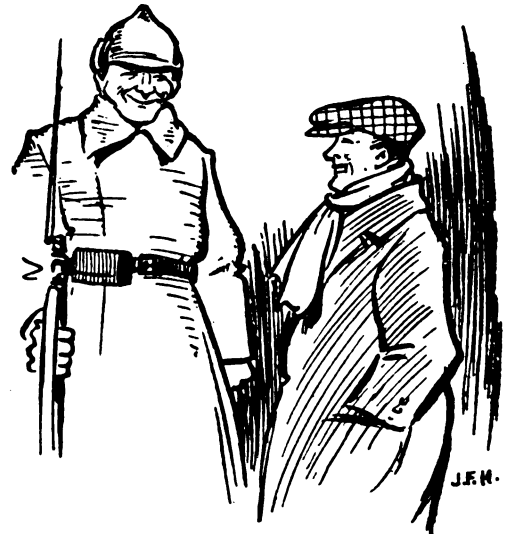
In Moscow the plutocrat has been disciplined until even the air space in his flat has been rigorously rationed and the Trades Council meets in the Hall of the Nobility, while the General Council occupy a Palace. In London Mrs. Phillipson wants the inordinately long shop hours extended. In Moscow no shop can remain open more than forty-eight hours per week except in the case of a few specially-selected Co-operative Stores where they have to keep a double staff of employees. In Russia the Trades Unionist gets his ticket for Grand Opera at a greatly reduced rate and occupies one of the best seats, while the bourgeois pays double and sits at the back.

When crossing the desert in a train-de-luxe you pass strings of baggage camels jogging along just as other camels did a thousand years ago; and on the roads near Tiflis the traffic seems to be equally divided between five-ton motors and asses with panniers. Go into an engineering shop

and you will find automatic lathes and electrically-driven cranes, equal to the best we have in England, and you will also find machinery and methods in operation which we scrapped fifty years ago.

#### Labour Demonstrations and Labour Demonstrations.

There is a loud speaker giving the latest news in every square in every town—and in most of the villages—while there are thousands of square miles of country and never a decent road. When you have a Labour demonstration in England you get a few hundred shamefaced men to amble along in a procession behind one dingy banner, while thousands of spectators



*Fraternising with a Red Guard.*  
(From a snapshot by the writer.)

through the footpath. When Moscow has a Labour demonstration over a million men and women with thousands of beautiful banners, streamers, tableaux and cartoons, march thirty abreast for a solid eight hours and few are left to throng the pavements.

Crowns and coronets grace our royalty and nobility on State occasions: in Russia these gewgaws serve the prosaic purpose of securities for the bank note issue. Russia runs its own bank, which makes no fortunes for governors and shareholders. When the Civil Service of the régime went on strike to try to sabotage the Revolution,

a railway signalman took charge of the banknote printing department. He is still there. Methods and equipment have been improved out of all recognition. He has abolished checking, searching and all the humiliations considered essential in a capitalistic world; quality has improved; output has gone up; and not a single note has ever gone astray. I don't think the hidebound financial experts of Europe would approve of this one little bit, but at all events it works.

#### Houses—Old Style and New.

The head of the Baku Oilfields was formerly a fitter working at the bench: in four years he has revolutionised the system to an extent which amazed the experts from the oilfields of America. Gone are the wasteful methods of the exploiters. The people who now control the oilfields are not here to-day and gone to-morrow. Being born in Baku and expecting to die there, they are determined to make it a place fit to live in—and they are succeeding. Look at the hovels the British capitalists build for their workpeople—long rows of single-storied flat-roofed kennels; a front door and a narrow window, an earthen floor, no cupboards, no fireplaces, no water, no sanitary conveniences, no privacy, a low bench run-

ning round three sides of the room, forming the seat by day and the bed by night, for all ages and both sexes. Look again and see the beautiful bungalows of the new era, built of stone and with tiled gabled roofs, oak block floors, bathroom with shower-bath, tiled kitchen, three bedrooms, and with all lighting, heating and cooking done by the natural gases with which the capitalist exploiters formerly poisoned the air. Look on this and look on that and then shout with the oilworkers of Baku, "Down! Down with Capitalism! Up! Up with the Revolution!"

And the Editor says "be brief." Seven hundred pages would be useless. You want seven volumes: one republic—one volume: and then a separate index.

What do I think about Russia? When I see the wonderful things she has done in five years I am amazed. It's marvellous—unbelievable. But when I see the things she has still got to do, when I see what a tiny proportion of her task even these marvellous achievements represent, I am appalled. The Russians have got a continent to rebuild stone by stone, house by house, road after road. And then I look into their eyes, see the dauntless faith that shines therein, and I say, "Comrade, you'll do it!"

## POLITER IMPERIALISM

*"Methods vary with the march of time, and their variations are all in the direction of an increasing gentleness. The modern statesman annexes almost with a gesture of motherhood. His sterner predecessors, confronted with a prize, incontinently grabbed it—his grandfather by simple annexation, his father by a rigmarole about Spheres of Influence. But the softer tread of our contemporaries disdains such brutal footsteps. It advances under cover of a vigorous protestation of belief in the essential independence of the coveted object—and to lend it money. An occasional landing party of Marines may keep a watchful eye on the security, but always with a stern insistence that it is no property of theirs. As the game develops, the object of desire may be impelled (with perfect freedom of action, but one eye on the Marines) to enter a treaty of perpetual friendship and dependence with and upon the absorbing Power. There will be no vulgar annexation. That is precisely where the method of Naboth's vineyard differs from that of Wall Street."*

(From *Conquistador: American Fantasia*, by Philip Guedalla).

# JOHN S. CLARKE

## *The Man and His Book*

By ARTHUR WOODBURN

**A** MAN who has been a seaman, tramped Zululand, been a reporter, worked in a wild beast show, edited the rationalist *Reform Journal*, edited *The Socialist* and *The Worker*, contributing regularly to the *Forward*, who, in addition, is an antiquarian, a lover of art and music, a poet and satirist, whose biting satires caused one Capitalist newspaper to christen him "The Poet Laureate of Hell," such a man could not fail to be interesting in whatever he does.

John S. Clarke, however, combines all this experience with a retiring modesty which makes him much less known than he otherwise would be.

My first memories of him carry me back about eighteen years to Edinburgh's forum "The Mound," where, as a rationalist lecturer, John S. Clarke held the interested attention of large crowds on Sundays evenings. His speeches were always full of matter, and disclosed at all times the student-mind. Above all he had the art of "getting it across."

### Shattered Illusions.

It was many years later, at the outbreak of war, when Socialists of all views were thrown together, that I came to know him as a Socialist. My attempts in argument to justify my romantic socialism led to my being introduced to J.S.C. to have my perspective adjusted. In case my own ability was insufficient to do justice to my point of



view, I took along two Socialist friends of more experience, but all to no purpose—we left with our romance completely overturned by the materialist conception of history.

Realising that mere "rationalism" was a negative position, John S. Clarke had gradually become convinced that Socialism was the only hope of the workers. He had become a member of a small band of S.L.P.'ers in Edinburgh who have had a great effect on the movement by stressing the necessity for study. This group published *The Socialist* and 1d. pamphlets, including *Historical Materialism*, *Wage, Labour and Capital* and *Value Price and Profit*.

The first named pamphlet had *The Law of Social Growth*, formulated by Marx, as an appendix and this little page became my guide in historical study for the succeeding years.

In explaining the materialist conception of history, J.S.C. did not tell us that "the intransigence of the proletariat evolves through the historico-economic process till the omnipotence and dictatorship of the bourgeoisie is overthrown," but showed the determining factors of social change in simple, clear and interesting language.

### Getting It Across.

Just before this period he had delivered the first Labour College lectures ever given in Scotland in connection with a railway-

men's class and his classes on history and evolution were the means of introducing many workers to independent working-class education. With the exception of the war years, he has an unbroken record of Labour College work and last year the Edinburgh College ran a series of public lectures by him at which a total of over 7,000 attendances were recorded.

The popularity of the lectures was largely due to the fact that John S. Clarke uses language which ordinary people can understand and that even dry-as-dust facts are made interesting by the introduction of humour or biting satire. The Labour College movement has no time to waste on education which is presented in language about as attractive as a prescription for medicine.

### Facts With Point.

With the object, therefore, of interesting workers in the necessity for studying the causes of historical change, the N.C.L.C. has published a book on *Marxism and History*, by John S. Clarke (paper 1/-, limp cloth 1/6, postage 1d.).

With all the liveliness of a controversy, it treats of many of the common fallacies

which contribute to confused thinking in even the Socialist movement.

**Man—as he is and as he thinks he is.**

The book discusses the important question as to whether man is the creator or the creature of his conditions and shows clearly that, while he thinks that he is a law unto himself, he is really far more dominated by external circumstances than he imagines.

The current fallacy, for instance, that Christianity freed the world from slavery is examined in a way that demonstrates that even Christianity itself has altered as a result of changed conditions.

Clarke's book also discusses the material basis of Art, Music and Literature, and it does this in a most fascinating way.

J.S.C.'s shilling book does not, of course, do away with the desirability of having a larger textbook on Historical Materialism, which would form a reference book for advanced students. But as an introduction to the subject, *Marxism and History* will take a lot of beating. Widely circulated, it will add many hundreds to the ranks of N.C.L.C. students, and tutors themselves will find in the book scores of pithy "pars" just asking to be quoted at the classes.

## THE CLASS-STRUGGLE IN INDIA

By M. H. D.

*Hundred Per Cent. Indian*, by C. G. Shah, and *India and China*, by an Internationalist, with foreword by S. Saklatvala, M.P. (published by C. G. Shah at Ranchhod Bhuvan, Girgaum, Bombay) are two admirable little pamphlets designed to propagate Marxian ideas in the Indian nationalist movement. The former is a statement of the basic principles of Historical Materialism in pleasantly direct and lucid language, as opposed to the reactionary teachings of Gandhi, who preaches that India's true enemy is "civilisation, science and machinery," and that for salvation India needs to go back to the handloom and find her "soul." The second half of the pamphlet gives a very illuminating summary of Indian history from the Marxian point of view.

The second pamphlet is the famous pamphlet for the alleged authorship of which Comrade Philip Spratt is at present being prosecuted in Bombay for "sedition." This well-written

survey concludes that China and India "though so different superficially, present a close analogy if we look more closely." In both there is "the parallel growth of industrialism and the formation of the capitalist and working classes, the former being in each case largely subordinate economically to the foreign interests. In each case also the Imperialists have won over politically a section of this capitalist class, in addition to the land-owning and feudal remnants. . . . We are confronted with a pair of countries in situations closely similar, and pursuing paths of development which are in many respects almost coincident."

The future path for India, according to the author, lies first in the National Congress ("corresponding roughly to the Kuomintang") approaching the masses and helping to base the movement in the masses by organising trade unions and peasant leagues, as in China; second, in the organisation of a Party of the working class and peasantry to work inside the National Congress, as the "left-wing" worked inside the Kuomintang; third, the formation of a united front with European workers and with other oppressed peoples (China, Korea, Egypt, Java, Africa, etc.); fourth, the abandonment of the old, defeatist Gandhi doctrines of "passive resistance."

# BRITISH CAPITAL IN 1927

## *A Review — and a Forecast*

By D. PARSONS

**A** YEAR after the miners went back; ten years after the "boys" came home—how have the capitalists fared? Viscount Churchill at the recent meeting of the British Overseas Bank (of which he is chairman) answered the question. He said:—

"During the year under review there have been few events of outstanding importance. In our own country recovery from the effects of the coal strike has been less rapid than many had hoped, and in the volume of our trade we are still well behind the year 1925."

Notice the tone of tempered acceptance of ill-being which is nowadays prevalent. In 1927, in fact, after the post lock-out pick-me-up, production has been dragging along. If we compare the production figures for November with the highest month of the year and with the average monthly production in 1913 the general position is fairly clear.

	Nov. 1927.	Highest. 1927	Aver. 1913.
Coal (mn tons)	20	24 (Mar.)	24½
Pig Iron (ooo tons)	576	720 (May)	869
Steel (ooo tons)	699	950 (Mar.)	649
Unemployed (ooo)	1172	1015 (May)†	—
(Per cent.)	10	8.8 (May)†	
Exports (U.K.) (mn £)	71	53 (Apl.)†	44
Imp. (U.K.) (mn £)	107	114 (Jan.)	64

† Lowest.

The basic industries are still in a depressed condition. The high export in November may be simply a jump in clearing off earlier activity and not the beginning of a sustained rise. The reports from the leading industries tell of a uniform sagging. Take a few of the *Midland Bank Review* verdicts for the end of November:—

Cardiff, Coal: "Expectations of any real improvement in the coal trade before the new year have now been abandoned."

Glasgow, Shipbuilding: "There is considerable activity in the Clyde shipbuilding yards, though the number of men employed is still

less than in normal pre-war times . . . an early decrease in tonnage in hand is anticipated."

Birmingham, Engineering: "The general volume of business is only moderate . . . motor car manufacturers on the whole are not fully employed."

Leeds: "Little of a cheering nature can be reported from this district."

Manchester: "Conditions for spinners of American yarns have been chaotic . . . Towards the end of the month the sales have been rather larger, and some speculative buying has taken place, but ruinous rates have been accepted."

A certain amount of activity there is, of course, and railway freights are keeping up rather remarkably. One looks to distribution (though one big store means the shutters up in many small ones); to artificial silk; to electrical engineering (though a lull has set in there); to building (though here again the reduction in subsidy has caused a slow-down) and a few other such industries. But these industries are either quite small like engineering, which only employs 79,000, or artificial silk (55,000) or chemicals (95,000) or largely parasitic, living on the rentier class. The chairman of Dorman Long realises that

"unless the exporting trades are prosperous it is only a matter of time before the present artificial internal prosperity of the country must come to an end."

No doubt in his case it is partly a *cri de cœur*; but not only is the whole productive economy of British Capitalism in the United Kingdom terribly dependent on the basic industries, but there are very large capital values sunk in them, including bank capital. Hence the talk of reorganisation, of a new policy to enable the capital obligations to be met from a contracted output.

### The Domain of the £.

We must not, however, forget that the dominion of British capital is wider than

that of the customs barriers and factories of the United Kingdom. It is in fact the domain of the £ sterling.

The income of the bourgeoisie is in the £ sterling; their investments are measured by it and their power to make new investments depends on its value.

Hence the terrific drive to restore the value of the £; the persistent and determined policy of deflation (i.e., of lowering prices in terms of the £) as part of the policy of the whole finance-capital class. But the £ is in itself only a token and its value the balance of several forces. These may be summarised under these heads:—

- (a) Foreign trade, i.e., the accumulation or dis-accumulation of surplus in the world's commodity market.
- (b) Capital movements, i.e., gaining or losing rights to exploit overseas workers and the tribute from these rights. The overseas investments total some £4—5000 million.
- (c) Money market movements, i.e., the loaning of liquid capital between one monetary centre and another according to the rates of interest ruling. Keynes estimates that there are £600 million in the world's money markets.

We may glance at these movements in 1927. The British bourgeoisie have been quite unable to regain the export position Great Britain held before the war, though the physical volume of imports has increased. The volume figures are given below:—

	Export of U.K. goods	Imports retained
	1913 = 100	
1924	76	107
1925	76	112
1926	68	118
1927 (estimate)	79	125

The consequence of this is the growing disparity between imports and exports; that is, as far as payment for goods goes the annual debit is increasing. The figures of the adverse balance may be given. From them should be taken, however, the payments earned by the shipping service and various commissions.

Year	TRADE BALANCE.		Balance
	Adverse Visible excess of imports	Shipping and other earnings	
	Million £		
1913	158	129	- 29
1923	203	150	- 53
1924	349	215	- 134
1925	395	215	- 196
1926	477	199	- 282
1927 (est.)	400	200	- 200

**A Balance on the Wrong Side.**

It is clear from these figures, not only that there is a debit balance: that is a familiar feature of imperialism; but that the debit balance has increased in recent years. It is increasing very largely because of the violent efforts made by British capital to get back the equal exchange with the dollar, a move made before the real adjustments had taken place in foreign trade relationships and which had the effect of causing still further weakness. This happened because of the effect on prices.

The *Financial News* recently admitted this.

“The more rapid deflation added to the weight of all overhead charges, and to those of taxation and rates not least. It added equally to the weight of railway and other traffic costs, and, adjustment apart, to that of wage costs. In terms of sterling all these various costs may have remained nominally the same. But sterling did not remain the same in terms of foreign currencies. Owing to its appreciation, sterling represented more in foreign moneys. In other words, the same nominal sum in sterling became a rise in price abroad.” (Dec. 8, 1927.)

**Increasing the National Debt—Our Share in the Empire.**

The reduction in prices was calculated at the time of the return to gold to be about 10 per cent. (the Samuel wage reduction); actually it has already been 15 per cent. The fall has hindered export and production as a whole because of its effect in adding 15 per cent. to the *real* value of debt (national and debenture, etc.) and, chiefly, by making a rapid reduction of costs necessary, in turn involving the terrific wage

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struggles and production hold-ups of 1926.

The question now arises as to how the bourgeoisie met the situation which arose from the adverse trade position in 1927. To answer this we must turn to the record of the above groups.

The available figures are as follows :—

	Trade balance.	Income from overseas investments. Million £	Surplus from available. £	Capital export. Per cent.	Whole- sale. price.
1913	- 29	210	181	159	100
1923	- 53	150	97	136	159
1924	- 134	220	86	134	166
1925	- 196	250	54	88	166
1926	- 282	270	- 12	112	148
1927 (est.)	- 200	250	50	120	141

These figures are not complete. A good deal of capital export takes place which never comes into the public issue lists; the estimate of overseas income is rough and takes no account of money re-invested overseas. Moreover, the capital raised for overseas borrowers is not always exported but is kept in London as "liquid capital." The figures exclude on the other hand disaccumulation of capital by sale. The *Times* City Editor attributes considerable importance to this factor. He wrote recently :—

"Not only has America lent vast sums to Germany and other countries in Europe with stabilised currencies and to Central and South American nations, but she is continually buying British investments in American and Canadian enterprises . . . within the past few weeks American buying of British held securities in Empire or foreign enterprises has been very marked and American capitalists have shown a keen desire to invest capital in, or to raise money for British industrial enterprises." (December 10th, 1927).

It is impossible to strike a balance between the ingoing and outgoing capital.

The figures, finally, take no account of the position of money market movements. There seems, however, no doubt that it is in this last group of movements that the explanation of how the bourgeoisie carried on, and not only carried on but brought the £ sterling to post-war "record" values in terms of dollars, is to be found.

### The Bank Holds the Reins.

The money market has been kept under the rigid control of the Bank of England;

and the Bank working with the American Reserve Bank is keeping its rate of interest on short loan money higher than in America. This tempts large American deposits to stay over here. The Bank of France also has £100 million or so lodged here and probably a large amount of other foreign money is also here.

The position of the bourgeoisie in this respect is precarious and artificial; they are either living on their capital or borrowing in order to maintain their imperialist policy. They will strive to liquidate this position by wage reductions ("temporarily," pending reorganisation, i.e., scientific sweating) in textiles and in "sheltered" trades; more will be heard of the migration of the unemployed. They may be helped by the slight rise of prices in America and the deflation in other countries. But these factors will not in reality solve anything; they will simply reproduce in the whole economy the conditions now ruling in the international coal market. Such is the outlook for 1928.



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# SHOULD WOMEN WASH UP?

*or, The Marxist and his Missus*

By ELLEN WILKINSON, M.P.

**W**HY is it that the more hard-boiled a Marxian a man is, the more he is convinced that women's place in the scheme of things is to wash up? As a bright lass in my constituency once remarked, "I've washed up for Peace, I've washed up for Socialism, I've washed up for Disarmament, but I'm *not* going to wash up for Education, because I want to be in the class and not at the sink!" She had run socials to raise money for every conceivable good



*The Hardshell at Home.*

Socialist object, and for once she wanted to sit down quietly and learn a bit about the causes she loved.

Unfortunately there are many of our women who think education is dull, or they are frightened by long words, or they don't care to admit that they need teaching. This is a real difficulty in the case of the mother of young children. The kiddies don't expect father to know everything—he so obviously doesn't. But they would be horrified right to their small bones at the idea of *mother* going to something that suggested school.

### You can't Always be Shopping.

On the other hand, in these days of small families, smaller homes, and the smallest possible incomes, there are women who find themselves with an amount of leisure time

to be filled which would have horrified their mothers. There isn't enough money to go out shopping every afternoon, and an intelligent woman can't talk to her neighbours every day about the children. Sometimes she is wistfully conscious that her husband's outside interests are absorbing him—the trade union lodge, the co-operative committee, the I.L.P. Branch. And she would like to be able to discuss China, or the Trades Disputes Act with him, as well as the reason why the plumber didn't come although she had sent three times to say that the pipes were blocked.

### Are Mixed Classes a Mistake?

Certainly not—especially for the younger women whose brains in this generation have marched alongside their brothers'. But for the older women, especially the married ones, whose schooldays are a good way behind, and whose minds have had to be kept to the daily grind, I think it is better to have separate classes. Their attention must be gripped at the very beginning by a subject that is intimately concerned with their daily lives. Economics in a coal mining or iron and steel area should be linked up to the pressing question of unemployment. Examples from Johnny's boots cut more deeply into the hearer's mind than algebraic formulæ.

### Try Psychology—with a Shorter Name.

I have been re-reading the Psychology\* text-book lately. In spite of all the criticisms from people with special fads, what an excellent bit of work it is. If I had to take a class of women who were just being introduced to the N.C.L.C. I would begin with a series of talks based on that book. The intelligent mother of young children is herself an experimental psychologist and is thrilled to discover that little things she had

\* New edition now ready, 2/8 post free from the N.C.L.C.



noticed about the children's behaviour are being carefully classified by scientists and have books written about them.

A wise teacher—one of those heaven-sent gifts who could get his class working *with* him, instead of just sitting mum to receive bits of information—once got a class of married women to observe each time one of their children was naughty and to write down in a notebook exactly the reason as far as they could discover. It revolutionised the home-life of those seven women students of his. Instead of the quick slap, the hasty chiding word, the child found an interested mother who stopped her work to ask questions.

As a good New Year's resolution for the College Secretary I suggest the forming of at least one woman's class† in connection with each College. Don't think that anyone will do as a teacher. Such a class will need the best brains you can get. So here's luck to you in finding the right one.

† London N.C.L.C. Women's Committee is doing good work in providing women's classes. What are the other districts doing?—Ed.

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## Chats with New Students:

# MAN, MIND AND MATTER

By "MARXIST"

**A** DONCASTER student scolds us severely for what we said last month about "Changing Hearts and Changing Minds." He declares that "to say that matter 'shapes the mind'" is "unscientific muddle." He objects to one assertion that changes in history are due to changes in material conditions and, as evidence, contends that a pig put in a palace still remains a pig. Although he is a Socialist, "Doncaster" doesn't realise that he is simply repeating the old comfortable-class argument that it's no use giving baths to miners for they simply use them as coal-boxes.

### Socialism and the Sty.

"Socialism," our friendly critic continues, "was born in the minds of men who lived in the 'sty,' so to speak, but within whose breast there was a 'man' desirous of living the life of a 'man.'" "All the time the controlling factor is mind; matter is the 'tool' of 'mind.'"

We never said—and no sane person would—that a man's own inherited, physical qualities were nothing and the conditions in which he lived were everything. A man's bones, blood, brain, etc., are part of the "material" on which his "mental" behaviour and ideas depend. What we *did* say was that a man's bodily qualities hadn't changed much during the last 4,000 years or so. What then *has* changed? His "material environment"—the conditions in which he lives! Thus the chief differences in mental behaviour between us to-day and the primitive savage must presumably be due to this change of external *conditions*.

When we come to the question of pigs, of course, the thing is different. A pig is a different kind of animal from a man; and

consequently you would expect him to act differently. Even so, it's not impossible, as every farmer knows, to make a pig fairly clean in habits, given the right material conditions.

### Comrade Pig.

It's obvious, though, that you can never turn a pig into a man, because it is physically and materially different. But according to the argument of our Doncaster comrade, you ought to be able to turn him into a good Socialist if only you talked to him long enough and so "changed his mind." In the interests of science he might spend his spare time experimenting!

No Marxist denies, of course, that "ideas" influence "things," any more than a doctor denies that your state of mind may influence your bodily state of health. But this does not cause the doctor to try to mend a man's broken leg by "Coué-ing" him; he performs a surgical operation, i.e., alters the material conditions!

To go back to the problem of Socialism: if the social ills we complain of were just trifling, superficial things, we might be able to remove them by simply doing a little thinking and arguing. But since what is wrong with capitalism is something very fundamental, "thinking" alone won't do it: we've got to effect a change in the material basis of society and that desire for change in a certain form—Socialism—is forced on our minds by the rise and development of capitalism—again a change in material conditions.

True, no history is made unless men think. But what the student wants to know is why men think in a certain direction at one time and why in the opposite direction at another.

However, I need not say more for the N.C.L.C. has just published a book on "Marxism and History," which explains in a simple and fascinating way how history is made.

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By an unfortunate printer's error on page 402 of our December issue, the signature to the letter on *Marx and Matter* appeared as S. Gordon Wornell instead of S. Gordon Newall.

## THE BOOKSHELF

By J. F. HERRIN

I THINK I've mentioned before in these pages that I had the good fortune, when visiting the Rand School in New York, to hear Scott Nearing lecture to a class on "Politics." I say 'lecture.' But as a matter of fact Nearing's method resulted in something which was much more like a conversation than a lecture. The students had not merely to 'join in.' They had to start the ball rolling by themselves attempting definitions of a political party, which Nearing in his turn criticised. The class became a discussion circle—and it was a pretty keen discussion, too. And the tutor, unobtrusively but very adroitly, kept the discussion on the rails whenever—which was often—it looked like straying off across country. It was the finest demonstration of teaching method I have ever seen, and it could only have been done by a man who was absolutely master of his subject—and of himself.

Nearing has now written a book which shows the same easy mastery of subject-matter, and the same easy, conversational style which characterises his teaching—*Where is Civilization Going?* (Vanguard Press, 2/6. From N.C.L.C. (postpaid) 2/8). I advise every student who reads John S. Clarke's *Marxism and History*—you've ordered your copy, of course?—to follow up that book by reading Nearing's.

### Whence?—Whither?

Clarke's book is a first-class 'appetiser' for the history student. Nearing's takes him on to a survey of the whole sweep of world history, from the Stone Age to the Soviets. It traces the big economic, technical, social and cultural changes which from the real landmarks in the story of man's development—summarising in a score or so of easily-read pages all that the ordinary man or woman needs to know of the work of Morgan, Müller-Lyer, Wissler and others. After describing the coming of civilization, Nearing takes up the story

from the beginnings of the modern era, four centuries ago, and the gradual establishment of Business Class Rule, culminating in World Imperialism. He does not stop there. He insists that a knowledge of the past is of no use unless it gives one a 'sense of direction'—"an understanding of the direction in which the human race is travelling that will give a real perspective from which to judge day-to-day events." So, with the courage of his own convictions, he surveys the world of to-day, and sees the Passing of Civilization and the beginnings of a new social order—no longer merely a dream or an ideal, but actually, in Russia especially, in the process of becoming a reality. One may not agree with everything Nearing says in his chapter on The Labour Movement—the social force which is the decisive factor in the transition stage; but one can yet admire his downrightness and honesty in getting to grips with the problems of our own day.

Note, you can order this book from the N.C.L.C. If it doesn't have a big circulation in our movement we shall not be living up to our opportunities.

### A Man of Parts.

To students of the history of economic theory the name of Sir William Petty will be quite well-known. Two large volumes of hitherto unpublished writings by him have just appeared, and a *Manchester Guardian* reviewer gives some interesting biographical details about him:—

Petty ran away from home with sixpence in his pocket to become a cabin boy when he was 13, and was earning a living by hawking sham jewellery in France before he was 15. In the next eight years he studied at universities in France and the Netherlands, and returned to England at 23, soon to become professor of anatomy at Oxford, professor of music at Gresham College, physician to the Cromwellian army, surveyor of Ireland, a wealthy landed proprietor (out of the Irish gains), an inventor, and a leading spirit in the active intellectual society of Restoration London that we know best in the pages of Pepys and Evelyn. There are good grounds for accounting him the English founder of statistical method and of modern political economy.

Evidently the worthy William flourished

in the days before specialisation was fashionable.

### India.

Out of a number of very interesting items in Benn's Sixpenny Series, I would like to mention one which I have just been reading—*A History of India*, by Edward Thompson. This is a really useful little book for students and tutors who want to supplement a study of present-day Indian problems with some outline knowledge of Indian history. Its author, by the way, has recently written a notable novel about India—*An Indian Day*. I was overjoyed to find in it (cf. my remarks on Miss Katherine Mayo's *Mother India* a month or two ago) a scathing passage about an American woman journalist, escorted by "brass hats," giving India "the once-over" as a preliminary to writing a book about it. Mr. Thompson, it would appear, has lived a good many years in India. His scorn for impressionistic journalists (and for "brass hats") is correspondingly acute.

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(R. W. Leicester, Nov. 27, 1927.)

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# HATE AND HISTORY

## *Some School Text-Books*

By MARK STARR

**B**EFORE affecting superiority and amusement concerning the campaign waged by "Big Bill" Thompson against the use of alleged pro-British text-books in the American schools, we should do well to examine many of our own school texts and remove from them the excrescences of nationalism. For example, a text-book widely used endeavours to prove that the United States rebellion of 1763 was only an attempt of the colonists to escape paying their share of the war. Rudyard Kipling, who collaborated with C. R. L. Fletcher to make this *School History of England*, sneers thus:—

" 'Twas not while England's sword unsheathed  
Put half a world to flight,  
Nor while their new-built cities breathed  
Secure behind her might;  
Not while she poured from Pole to Line  
Treasure and ships and men—  
These worshippers at Freedom's shrine  
They did not quit her then.  
Not till their foes were driven forth  
By England o'er the main—  
Not till the Frenchman from the north  
Had gone, with shattered Spain;  
Not till the clean-swept ocean showed  
No hostile flag unrolled,  
Did they remember what they owed  
To Freedom—and were bold."

### Piracy is the Best Policy.

What must a Dane feel when he can read in R. B. Mowatt's *History of Great Britain* the following comment upon Britain's seizure (September, 1807) of the fleet of neutral Denmark? "The memory of Canning's stroke has remained an inspiration for British statesmen and a cause of uneasiness to foreign schemers. That is what the German Emperor, William II., meant a hundred years later when he told Admiral Sir John Fisher that he suspected the British Admiralty of meaning to 'Copenhagen the German fleet.'" "

It would need a Chinaman to denounce

fittingly the text-book omissions and half-truths which hide the real nature of the British entry into China and the Opium Wars (1840-42). We have yet to find a text-book which in dealing with the Indian Mutiny even hints at the counter-atrocities revealed by Dr. E. Thompson in *The Other Side of the Medal*.

### Great Lies About the Great War.

The "sole guilt" of the Central Powers in causing the Great War reigns almost unchallenged in the history primers—a notable exception being F. C. Happold's *The Adventure of Man*. According to the average school history, only the Germans bombed cities. Denunciation of the German submarine is common, but no hint is given of its close connection with the British blockade of Germany. A book published as late as 1924, A. Franklin's *Historical Geography of Britain and the British Empire, Book II.*, comes up with this appeal:—

"If we are to maintain the integrity of this great Empire, we must shoulder manfully our national responsibilities and endeavour while young to fit ourselves for the work. In later years the vote must be used to further the interests of the State as a whole, and should once more the trumpet blast of war call us to repel the attacks of an enemy, we must respond readily, and do all in our power to preserve unbroken the greatness and independence of our Empire."

"Burn, burn all the books which teach hatred," appealed Anatole France eight years ago, and in Britain, too, a bonfire would not lack material. Socialist French school teachers have just published a history book of their own and it would be well to imitate them.

Of course, in many school works nationalistic bias is eclipsed by anti-working-class bias. The "historian" who talks of the "lesser breeds" has little time to spare for the "lower orders." But that is another story.

# MUNICIPAL BANKS

*In Birmingham and Elsewhere*

By J. HAMILTON

**B**ANKING is one of the latest forms of municipal enterprise, and the story of the Birmingham Municipal Bank, the pioneer example in this country, is enthusiastically detailed by Mr. J. P. Hilton, the manager, in a book recently published (*Britain's First Municipal Bank*, The Blackfriars Press, Popular Edition, illustrated, 1/6). The appeals for funds to prosecute the war had the result in Birmingham of the promotion of a Bill to establish a Municipal Savings Bank. Hampering restrictions as to rate of interest, etc., were imposed in order to placate vested interests and a provision inserted in the Act that the Bank should be wound up three months after the termination of the war.

The Corporation, however, impressed with the possibilities of Municipal Banking, took advantage of the recommendations of a Committee set up by the Ministry of Health with a view to assisting the building of working class houses and were enabled to get a bill passed in 1919 for the establishment of a Bank. The development has certainly been phenomenal. Deposits are accepted of 1d. upwards and interest is paid at the rate of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. per annum. There are now 233,494 depositors, roughly one in four of the population, and the accumulated funds amount to £7,939,859. This is credited mainly to small depositors, 34 out of every 100 have not more than £1 to their credit. The business is transacted in some 26 branch premises, the cost of which has been met entirely out of profits. The house purchase department has enabled 7,201 persons to purchase their own homes by advances totalling £2,398,118. The Corporation has been enabled to secure several millions

of cheap money and in addition the Bank performs utility services by collecting water, electricity and gas accounts.

Obviously such Municipal Banks, long established in Germany and elsewhere, have much to commend them, but as there are no general powers permitting Municipalities to establish Banks a private Act of Parliament is necessary. So far financial vested interests, Trustee Savings Banks and so on have successfully blocked the endeavours of some twenty other Boroughs who have sought similar powers. Endeavours have been made to get general powers by Act of Parliament, such as the "Local Authorities (Banks) Bill" presented in February of this year. This bill would authorise local authorities with a population of 150,000 or over, or a combination of local authorities giving that population, to establish Banks. All such attempts have been defeated.

Faced with the improbability of Parliamentary sanction, Mr. Tom Johnston, M.P., conceived the idea of members of a Town Council running a Bank as a limited undertaking, the directorship of the Bank to be restricted to members of the Council and that a director ceasing to hold office as a councillor should also cease to be a director. On these lines Kirkintilloch Municipal Bank was established in 1920 with an authorised capital of 2,000 shares at 1/-

## SCIENCE AND WAR.

*The whole question of improved armaments has been approached by the governments of the earth in a spirit of nervous and unreflecting haste, whereas the right way was lying plainly before them, and had only to be pursued with calm determination. The learned vigils and labours of a certain class of inventors should have been rewarded with honourable liberality as justice demanded; and the bodies of the inventors should have been blown to pieces by means of their own perfected explosives and improved weapons with extreme publicity as the commonest prudence dictated. By this method the ardour of research in that direction would have been restrained without infringing the sacred privileges of science.*

JOSEPH CONRAD, "The Mirror of the Sea."

each. The deposits are transferred to the Town Council funds at a low rate of interest which has resulted in reduced rating. The last report (April, 1926) shows a sum of £31,910 6s. 9d. standing to the credit of 750 depositors. Similar Banks have been established in Clydebank, Johnstone, Irvine, Peebles, Selkirk and Motherwell.

It is rather remarkable that to Mr. Neville Chamberlain is attributed the idea of the Birmingham Bank and he has stated that "You may call it Socialism if you like; I have never been frightened by a name; I do not care whether it is Socialism or not so long as it is a good thing."

Well, it is not Socialism; but it will be rather interesting to see, if general powers are granted to establish such Banks, what policy will be adopted by the "Big Five" and other financial octopuses to preserve and safeguard their monopoly.

## KROPOTKIN'S CLASSIC

By R.W.P.

**T**HE republication of Kropotkin's history of *The Great French Revolution* in two volumes (Vanguard Press, sold by the N.C.L.C. at 2/6 a volume), is a great advantage to the worker-student. With Jaurès' monumental *Histoire*, Kropotkin's work gives the basis of a genuine "Pleb" history of the revolution. It is easily written, it is somewhat tempestuous and prejudiced (but none the less, perhaps all the more, interesting) and it is on the whole singularly accurate. As one of the classics of Socialist history it has for some time fetched considerable prices (since it went out of print) in the secondhand bookshop.

Kropotkin sets out consciously, as he carefully explains, to write the history of only *one-half* of the revolution. The revolution falls, he says, conveniently into two sections—firstly, the huge, half-blind movements of masses of peasants and (in a minor degree) of the town artisans; secondly, the fully conscious direction of the middle class. The middle class produced all the known leaders and shaped all the permanently effective political policy, and thought out the ideas—the very great

ideas, let it be said—of the revolution. The mass movements were directed to certain, sometimes imperfectly understood, economic ends: the middle class leaders had to accommodate their policies to these ends (or to check the peasants and workers discreetly). Only when they attempted to take up an attitude of absolute forbiddal, as did the Gironde, were they swept away.

Kropotkin records, and records very ably, the mass movement. He uncovered a great deal of material which, till he wrote, was practically ignored, and he set off scholars on a very rich field of research. But because he chose to deal with only one side of the history, we must not forget (as, from some of his rhetorical flights it seems that he did) that the other side also existed.

An *undirected* mass movement leads nowhere but to chaos and murderous defeat.

## AN AMERICAN LABOUR SCHOOL

**S**COTT NEARING writes:—The Young Workers' League Summer School has just completed its third summer's work at Brule, Wisconsin, U.S.A. Forty-seven young men and women, drawn from Wisconsin, Minnesota, and other North Central States spent six weeks of intensive study and educational work, attending classes, organising various types of labour activities, conducting hypothetical strikes, cooking, cleaning, carrying water, printing wall-newspapers, and doing many other things that suggest themselves to a group of active young representatives of the American Labour Movement.

Each student who was admitted to the school was required to bring a recommendation from a trade union, a co-operative society, or some other recognised unit of the labour movement. Students were carefully selected. Among the hundred who applied, more than half were rejected.

The school is conducted on a united front basis by various labour groups in the Central West who are anxious that their young folks should have more training than they can hope to get in the ordinary schools. No political or sectarian lines are drawn. About half of the student body is composed of boys and the other half of girls.

There were two permanent teachers at the school last summer. Special teachers were brought in from near-by points for special subjects. Beside this staff, there was a manager and two cooks. The actual work of the school, aside from class and social activities, was carried on by student work committees. Thus the whole school was made an experiment in social organisation.

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**HEARTS ARE SOMETIMES TRUMPS, BUT—**  
do they make history? See first of our 1/- Series "MARXISM AND HISTORY."

# AMONG THE BOOKS

By "PLEBS" REVIEWERS

**L**OCAL GOVERNMENT FOR BEGINNERS, by M. I. Cole. (Longmans, Green and Co., 1/- and 2/-). This is one of the new series just published for the W.E.A. From the Foreword we note that "The Committee believes that the authors have produced books which will appeal to independent students who want not to be told what to think but to be helped to think for themselves." We suppose this is, by implication, the old canard about the N.C.L.C. teaching.

This booklet is written in an interesting way, and there are a number of sly digs at accepted institutions. There is a slight error on p. 16, as we must note that receipt of poor law relief does not disqualify a Borough or County Councillor from sitting.

It is news to us to learn that the W.E.A. is "owned and controlled by working class bodies and members of the working class." Finance from Labour bodies is only a small part of its income, and "he who pays the piper calls the tune."

J.H.

From a perusal of Nos. 1 and 6 of *The Celebration Bulletin* (Nos. 1-6), edited by Dr. F. H. Hayward (1/- each, from 35-6 Temple Chambers, E.C.4) we think, despite their mixed nature, that these Bulletins would be rich in valuable suggestive matter to teachers in juvenile education either in the State schools or outside. They are orders of services in which are "celebrated" great men and women (generals are absent), seasons, institutions, and the Home, Empire, League of Nations, the Scientist, the Craftsman and so forth. The fact that the aim of such appeals to the emotions might not at present be ours provides additional reasons for making ourselves acquainted with them with a view to adaptation where opportunity permits. Some of them already make one think of a service that might take place in Morris' "News from Nowhere."  
M.S.

*In the Name of Life* (S.A.T., Leipzig, 2/-) is the title in English of the work of a Ukrainian author, E. Izgur, who had previously written books in Russian, White Russian, Dutch, and Yiddish, besides in his native Ukrainian. For this his latest work he has used Esperanto because it enables him to reach a world-wide circle of readers.

The theme of the book is the conquest of death. Izgur is not concerned with the mythical immortality which religion promises, but the actual abolishment of death which the work of Voronoff and others shows to be at least a possibility of the future.

The book ends with an epilogue in which he traces the victory of the workers over all the forces

which tend to shorten life, leaving the will to live free to assert itself: "Then disappeared the misery, poverty, hunger, lack of civil rights, and with them prostitution, rape, black, white and red slavery, brothels, venereal diseases and syphilis. . . . The institution of organised force—the state with its courts of law, prisons, torture-chambers, trained executioners, and laws, was regarded as a legendary epoch because when there existed a Law of Love and Solidarity, not written on paper, but ruling in everyday human life, there was no place for force in any form."

J. BACKHOUSE.

A group of trade unionist, anti-imperialist teachers have produced a new French history for children (*Nouvelle Histoire de France*, Libraire Gaonach, 9 Rue du Pont Firmin, Quimper, Finistère. 9 fr.—say 1/6). It is a most interesting book. The ordinary imperialist glorification of French conquests is omitted, and pictures of the horrors of war substituted: the economic causes of the Revolution are clearly shown, and the evils of colonialism. The general tone of the book is clearly Marxist, without Marx ever being mentioned. It will be a great improvement on the wretched stuff now served out to French children.

On the other hand, one is bound in honesty to say that our French comrades have not gone very far in the technique of teaching. The provision of very badly drawn imaginary pictures hardly lightens a book full of dictatorial short paragraphs followed by a résumé and questions. "Show why Louis XV. was a bad king" is a specimen of the facile judgment and the arrogant imposition of a personal opinion which this book (like most teachers' books) has as its chief fault. R.W.P.

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*A Defence of Communism—in reply to H. J. Laski*, by Ralph Fox. (C.P. of G.B., 1/-.)

Ralph Fox (late of Cambridge University) is now an honest-to-God Communist. No member of the Society of Jesus or Plymouth Brother ever had anything on him for a true believer. He knows why he is a Communist and tells us so in the first part of his book, which is an interesting, concise and readable re-statement of the Marxist theory upon which Communism is built.

In the second part he just gets his wool off because Laski (not a true believer) has dared to put his hand upon the Arc of the Covenant. It may be necessary to prove that Prof. Laski is misguided, wrong in his conclusions, and (to quote Fox) "in some cases foolish;" but why get so cross about it? If you are in possession of a solution to all problems, and *know* that you are "correct," then you can surely afford to be perfectly serene and unruffled. Surely Mr. Fox's irritation with Laski cannot be a sign that there is a catch in any of his arguments. W.H.

Mr. W. R. Ker Mack's little book in the "Cambridge Manuals" series—*The Expansion of Britain: A Geographical History*—was an exceedingly interesting piece of work. His new book, *Human Environment and Progress: The Outline of World Historical Geography* (W. & A. K. Johnston, 4/-), is rather disappointing. It certainly does not supplant Fairgrieve's *Geography and World Power*; but the geography tutor will note it for reference, especially since it deals more fully than Fairgrieve with modern history (the British Empire and the United States especially). J.F.H.

*Capitalist Combines*, by G. M. Colman. (Longmans Green & Co.; 1/- and 2/-). This book, which deals with the growth of the modern types of industrial consolidation, completely ignores the historical significance of the facts set out in the text. A few examples are given of the varied types of syndicates, trusts, etc., including banking. Note is also made of their political activities. The presentation pro and con of "benefits" or "otherwise" to the community is in quite the approved W.E.A. style, and to those unversed in such studies it will provide endless arguments of the tightrope variety. F.S.

*Wrecking the Labour Banks*, by Wm. Z. Foster. (T.U. Education League, Washington; 25 cents). A sorry tale of the Labour banks and human fallibility. Buying out Capitalism by making every worker a Capitalist is a charm for those people who will not face realities. The resulting tragedy is described in this book. A.W.

*How Psychology Can Help*, by Rupert Croft-Cooke. (C. W. Daniel, paper 1/-, cloth 2/-). A useful beginners' book on a difficult subject. It is clearly written and readable. It is intended, the author says in his preface, for popular rather than for scientific use. The beginner in the study of psychology is apt to become tied up in a maze of technicalities, and this little book certainly does help one to avoid that. W.H.

## P's and Q's

TWO quotations from the chapter on "Modern Italy" in *The Mediterranean and its Problems*, by Major E. W. P. Newman, B.A. (Oxon), F.R.G.S. :—

"There is a great tendency for people to become 'pro' this and 'anti' that without sufficient investigation into the true facts of the case, and hence their conclusions are based on rationalisation instead of reason." (p. 13.)

"[In Fascist Italy] there are no strikes and the workers are happy. Can this be said of our coal-mining areas, where the men are under the tyranny of unscrupulous agitators in the pay of Moscow?" (p. 47.)

\* \* \*

"From my own experience, on the whole it is easier to manage big affairs than small ones . . . . In a small business if you make one mistake it means bankruptcy, but in a big business you can make mistakes and yet come out all right at the end of the year."—SIR A. MOND.

So that it seems the brains of our captains of industry are not necessarily bigger because their businesses are.

\* \* \*

The Confederation of Fascist Trade Unions organises welfare institutes "to promote the healthy and profitable enjoyment of the workers' leisure time by developing their physical, intellectual and moral capacity." These are called *Dopo lavoro*. With the emphasis on the 'dopo'?

\* \* \*

The Russian edition of the *Plebs Atlas* with special adaptations and a foreward by J.F.H., has just been published at Charkov. It is expected, in view of the previous popularity of the *Plebs Outline of Economic Geography*, that the first edition of 7,000 will be quickly sold at the price of 75 kopeks a copy. The arrangements were made by correspondence in Esperanto.

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# WHAT'S DOING?

## *The N.C.L.C. at Work*

**L**IST OF NEW AFFILIATIONS: The following is a list of the new affiliations received in October by the local Colleges:—

Bournemouth, 2; North Lancs. Area, 2; Belfast, 1; Guildford, 1; Lanarkshire, 1; London, 1; Newport, 1.

Surely the Colleges can do better than that. IS THE NAME OF YOUR COLLEGE HERE? IF NOT, WHY NOT?

**NEW TYPE OF LANTERN:** The new type of lantern, which is being supplied through the N.C.L.C. Head Office, is being welcomed by the Colleges. During the month lanterns have been purchased by Lanarkshire, North Lancs., South Wales, the North of Ireland and the Edinburgh Branch of the Scottish Painters. The new lanterns are a fraction of the weight of the ordinary lantern and carry their own lighting. In addition, they use tiny films instead of heavy glass slides, and each film, as well as being infinitely lighter, costs one-ninth of the price of a set of slides. It is worth knowing that the Scottish Painters' Branch have raised £25, which not only enables them to purchase the lantern and battery and a set of N.C.L.C. films, but leaves about as much again for further purchases. The lantern and battery cost £9 5s., carriage extra. The films cost 2d. per picture. Colleges that have ordered the lanterns are hoping to raise substantial sums by means of them.

**JOHN S. CLARKE'S BOOK "MARXISM AND HISTORY."** Has your College or class John S. Clarke's book on sale? If not, why not? Please enquire. It's the book of the winter.

**QUARTERLY AUDIT.** College Committees are reminded that the College books should be made up to the 31st December and audited, and a copy of the audited statement should be sent to the Divisional Organiser and to the N.C.L.C. Office.

**DIVISIONAL LISTS OF CLASSES.** The advantage of printed divisional lists (except when the College covers a large area and has many classes) has repeatedly been urged. Division 7 is the first to send in its January-March list.

### WHAT THE DIVISIONS ARE DOING.

**DIVISION 1.**—The Divisional Offices have been removed to 71 Prebend Gardens, Stamford Brook, W.6. Phone: Riverside 4521. The 1927 Report is now available. An Economics class has begun at Selsden. The Divisional Council has established one scholarship for the Divisional week summer school to be held in June, the scholarship to be confined to women attending this winter's classes. A fund has also been opened for further scholarships and women's organisations are being invited to contribute. The London District A.E.U. has

started the fund with a grant of £1. A number of Women's Co-op. Guilds have already sent on their quota. The Women's Committee has arranged a Tutors' Class on Public Speaking to be taken by F. J. Adkins on Mondays at 8 p.m., beginning January 23rd, at The Little Inn, Grays Inn Road (near King's Cross). The Division has a very ambitious programme for the summer—a week-end school at Newdigate Camp on May 5th and 6th (Inclusive fee of 9/- and booking fee of 4/-); a week-end school at Winterfolds Camp, near Guildford, on September 22nd and 23rd (Inclusive charge 10/-, booking fee of 4/-). London N.C.L.C.'ers should reserve their summer's holiday for the week summer school to be held in June.

**DIVISION 2.**—Littlehampton is to hold a social and dance in 1928 to raise funds. Sales of PLEBS are increasing. The event of the month was the N.C.L.C. conference at Bournemouth addressed by George Hicks and the organiser, and affiliations have increased remarkably. Other colleges should follow Bournemouth's lead in setting up conferences to rouse interest in the N.C.L.C. Members of the A.U.B.T.W., A.E.U., Shop Assistants, and Plasterers are rendering fine support. Guildford N.C.L.C. is vying with Bournemouth for the leadership. Their best scoop this month has been £5 5s. from the Co-operative. The organiser addressed a fine conference at Croydon, at which forty-four names were enrolled for a class with Principal T. Ashcroft as tutor. A branch of the Plebs League also has been started, thanks to the lead given by members of the Teachers' Labour League. Portsmouth and Eastleigh report new affiliations.

**DIVISION 3.**—Miss Cranham is now taking Economic Geography for the Staines class. The Norwich Economics Class through its fellow Esperanto Class is getting some first-hand data about Soviet wages and hopes to enjoy a visit from a German worker-Esperantist. Ipswich Club has offered to pay the class fees of any of its members. Felixstowe Club has decided to extend its grant of a free room. St. Albans reports successful weekly lectures. Cedar Paul, T. Ashcroft, W. T. Colyer, Miss V. A. Hyett are among the future lecturers. T. S. Wan, Allan Skinner, Leonora Thomas, W. H. Thompson, O. Parsons, A. Duncan and others have already made appreciated visits. Biology under B. Woolf at Peterborough attracts a regular attendance of 32 students and Economic Geography under F. Drake is not far behind.

**DIVISION 4.**—No report.

**DIVISION 5.**—We regret to report the resignation, owing to ill-health and pressure of work, of Comrade Evans, Bristol secretary. The new

secretary is Stanley Neale, of 32 Victoria Road, Staple Hill, Bristol. The Bristol T. and L.C. has appointed a Sub-Committee to meet the Bristol College. Cheltenham has formed a good class, and the Organiser addressed a T. and L.C. meeting on I.W.C.E. It was Cheltenham's most successful educational meeting. The Bath Labour Party has now decided to help in running a class. The Divisional Council met in Bristol on December 3rd, and expressed its appreciation of the work done.

**DIVISION 6.**—A new College has been set up in Coventry supported by the local Trades Council. A class has been started. Arrangements are being made to open a class for women, on Local Government. The Smethwick class has been a great success. The North Staffs. College is doing well. The Birmingham Plebs League is arranging a New Year Social early in January to spread the interest in I.W.C.E. work.

**DIVISION 7.**—About 100 Manchester students attended a meeting arranged by the N.C.L.C. Students' Association with R. Holder as speaker. Rochdale Branch of the Shop Assistants has formed a class. A class is arranged for Bury—January to March—to be held in the Textile Hall on Thursdays. The Tutors' Council is facing the problem of a uniform plan for the training of tutors. Bolton No. 2 Branch A.S.W. passed resolution "Requesting National E.C. to establish an Educational Scheme with N.C.L.C."

**DIVISION 8.**—Welcome back to tutor Granville Holt. After a lapse of 18 months Barrow College is opening a class on January 6th in the A.E.U. Club, with A. L. Williams as tutor. Many lantern lectures are being given throughout the area, with Comrades Sara, Taylor and Williams as lecturers. On February 25th and 26th a week-end school is to be held in the Weavers' Institute, Nelson, J. F. Horrabin, P. L. Taylor and Henry Sara are to lecture. A week-end school will be held in Preston during March, when it is hoped William Paul will lecture. In the Liverpool Area classes will be held under the auspices of the Liverpool T.C. and L.P., Wavertree Divisional Labour Party, Bootle

I.L.P., Bootle and Newton Labour Clubs, Birkenhead N.E. Women's Section Labour Party, N. Seacombe Women's Co-op. Guild, etc. In connection with the Liverpool Carter's Union scheme Professor J. Johnstone, D.Sc., will give a short course on "Psychology," to be followed by a series of lantern lectures by the organiser, illustrating the growth and problems of capitalism. Congratulations to Tom Lowe, one of our tutors, on his election as chairman of the Warrington Co-op. Society.

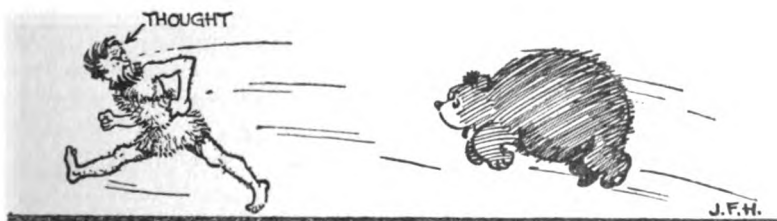
**DIVISION 9.**—There was a good conference at Darlington in December with Comrades Coxon, Moran and Rees as speakers. Coxon has been heard to advantage many times on I.W.C.E., but he excelled himself at this conference. Comrade Moran also put up a good case. Two debates are being arranged between the N.C.L.C. and the W.E.A. in the Darlington district—one by the Eston Trades Council and the other by the Darlington Trades Council.

**DIVISION 10.**—Comrade Wilson, Lanarkshire Secretary, states Alexander Anderson, M.A., a retired schoolmaster approaching 70 years of age, is taking three classes as a voluntary tutor this winter. Lanarkshire would like to know whether any College can beat that record. Edinburgh College is arranging a series of lantern lectures with John S. Clarke as the speaker. Fife held a successful meeting, the speaker being Ellen Wilkinson, M.P. Ayrshire classes report an increasing attendance. Glasgow is running a New Year Concert.

**DIVISION 11.—IRELAND.**—C. McCrystal addressed the Belfast Clifton Labour Party with the result that the party decided to affiliate. Geo. McBride addressed a well-attended branch meeting of the Lisburne A.E.U. The Sunday evening public lectures in Belfast continue to be well attended. Belfast closed the October-December Session with a social, together with an opportune lantern lecture on China. Lantern lectures open the January-March Sessions in Belfast, Newry, Lisburn and Comber.

**DIVISION 12.**—No report.

## THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS



"Every invention is the result of an idea, but where do ideas come from? From the conditions of life, friends. When primitive man was hungry and cold and the cave-bear threatened him with extinction . . . he thundering soon got an idea."

Page 19, *Marxism and History*, by J. S. Clarke  
—have you ordered your copy?

# THE REORGANISATION OF THE PLEBS LEAGUE

*Every member of the Plebs League, every student, every tutor, every reader of the magazine, in fact everybody who is interested in or sympathetic to I.W.C.E. is respectfully asked to read the following carefully—and to act upon it.*

**I**T will be remembered by those present at the Meet, at Kiplin last summer, that the problem of reorganising the Plebs League, in view of the taking over by the N.C.L.C. of the magazine and publications, was left to the Plebs Executive and to a joint committee of Plebs and N.C.L.C. representatives. After a series of meetings a scheme has been devised and agreed upon, which only needs the consent of the two executives to come into force. (By the time these words are printed the scheme will, we hope, have been actually ratified.)

The scheme embodies various new proposals, all put forward with the idea not only of building up a strong individual support for I.W.C.E., but also with a view to translating the more or less vague "sympathies" of students, tutors and supporters into something tangible, and uniting them into a force that will be a real help to the Magazine and to the movement generally.

## Our New Name.

The name "Plebs League" disappears and the new organisation emerges as "Plebs and N.C.L.C. Students' Association." The meaning of this alteration is clear at once. We need to unite past and present students as well as our old League members and friends into one organisation. Wherever practical, groups should be organised as Students' Associations in connection with the local colleges. The groups will have their own committees which will be responsible for any work (socials, dramatic performances, propaganda work, etc.) they may undertake. This is to be done, of course, in agreement with the local college or divisional council. (See constitution of Manchester Group in October *Plebs*.)

## Subscription.

The membership will still be on an individual basis, each member having a vote for the Executive Committee.

MEMBERS WILL PAY 5/- PER YEAR OR 2/6 PER HALF-YEAR: THIS WILL INCLUDE

MEMBERSHIP OF THE ASSOCIATION, AND THE MAGAZINE WILL BE SENT POST FREE TO EVERY MEMBER.

It was felt that the first duty of a Pleb was the support of the Magazine, and one thousand of such *advance* subscribers would go a long way to helping us out of some very present and pressing difficulties. Every member of the Association will thus become a postal subscriber and be registered as such. It is hoped that later on it may be possible to give additional advantages for this advance payment, such as a special discount on other publications.

## A National Committee.

The Association will have a National Executive Committee, composed of seven (7) members to be elected by a postal ballot of the membership. In view of the very great financial stress, it is suggested that this National Committee appoint three members to a sub-executive, which could meet for the transaction of ordinary business. Half-yearly meetings of the full National E.C. are to be held in London or at the Annual Summer School (to save expense).

Plebs representation on the N.C.L.C. Executive is guaranteed, a member of the National Committee of the Association to be the delegate.

Space in the Magazine will be devoted to the activities of the Association in various districts or to the discussion of any matter of policy in regard to I.W.C.E., in which students and individual supporters have special interest.

It will be seen that the individual membership vote is still maintained and the local groups will carry on. Every past member is urged to give the scheme his or her wholehearted support. The Plebs League, contrary to some people's expectations and hopes, is not a corpse! It has undergone a metamorphosis (dictionaries can be purchased at N.C.L.C. Publications Dept 1).

WILL YOU HELP TO MAKE ITS SECOND STAGE POWERFUL AND VIRILE?

WINIFRED HORRABIN (*Hon. Sec.*)

*Nominations for the National Committee of the Plebs and N.C.L.C. Students' Association should now be sent in. Please note these are NOT confined to residents in London.*

## IS HISTORY MADE BY SPOOKS?

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# I Know a Man Who Hates Books

He is a porter in a library. Now *I* am very different; the mere sight of a new book gives me delight. I like its bright freshness and the sheen of its newly-cut edge. I am enchanted with its genteel corpulence and its rounded back and the dignity with which it carries its little bit of gold leaf.

A haggard monk, bent over his table in some dim priory, toiling with quill and brush, brought forth with infinite labour a treasure in vellum. But those were easy days when life went by softly in sandalled feet.

Not so to-day. The ascetic monk makes way for big business and mass production. I like to think of modern processes, of the cunning Linotype and Monotype composing machines, the thump of the presses, the smell of glue, the machine binding and guillotining.

Good luck, I say, to the multiple press and all its works. There can never be too many good books. I am all for being a bookworm. It's a wise child who turns into a bookworm and a wise bookworm turns into **THE WORKERS' BOOKSHOP**, where the best works of the presses are to be found.

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