

Vol. XII. No. 2

February, 1920

THE PLEBS

AGITATE - EDUCATE - ORGANISE



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THE PLEBS

“I can promise to be candid but not impartial.”

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PLEBS IN COUNCIL

A CONFERENCE which may well prove to be a landmark in the history of Independent Working Class Education in this country was held at the Manchester Labour College on Saturday and Sunday, January 17 and 18, when, at the invitation of the Plebs League, a number of lecturers, class organisers and secretaries from various districts met to discuss and exchange ideas upon the needs of the classes and the most useful ways of co-ordinating and developing their work. It was a meeting which should be fruitful of good results, and one hopes that it may be practicable to hold such conferences at regular intervals in future. If for no other reason than that we work together better when we know each other, they would be well worth while.

Tom Bell occupied the chair, and there were representatives present from the Manchester, Liverpool, North Eastern (Northumberland and Durham) and Scottish Labour Colleges; from classes in all parts of Lancashire and Yorkshire, London, Cardiff, Derby, Notts, Kent, and from the Plebs Executive. The Board of Governors and the Staff of the Labour College (London) were also—unofficially—represented.*

The agenda, drawn up by the Plebs E.C., was as follows:—

Saturday

Chairman's Opening Address.

Resolution.—“That this meeting endorses the policy of the organisation of Plebs League membership into branches (wherever possible) as the most suitable method of securing the maintenance and development of Working-Class Education on independent class lines; by the promotion of classes, propaganda among trade unions and other working-class organisations, and the sale of the Plebs Magazine and other suitable educational publications.

“Further, it endorses the policy of classes so organised becoming affiliated to independent Labour Colleges, local or national.”

* The above list is incomplete, since this report is perforce written without reference to the report of the Credentials Committee.

DISCUSSION

Classes.—(1) How promoted; (2) How controlled; (3) How financed; (4) Students' fees; (5) Interchange of reports between classes and centre; (6) Possibility of summer schools, etc.

Lecturers.—(1) Directory of present lecturers; (2) Sources for additional lecturers; (3) Method of selecting lecturers; (4) Rates of pay; (5) Employment during summer months.

Sunday

Chairman's summary of Saturday's discussion.

Report of Credentials Committee upon Saturday's representation.

DISCUSSION

Subjects for Classes.—(1) Principal studies; (2) Method of presentation; (3) Supply of suitable text-books; (4) Supply of charts, wall diagrams, etc.; (5) Provision of Lantern Lecture Courses.

It will be seen that a wide field was covered, and that the whole of the agenda was discussed is sufficient testimony not only to the chairman's efficiency, but to the self-restraint of the various speakers. This present report must necessarily be brief and somewhat sketchy, and certain points may have to be left at the bare reference to them in the Agenda above. We shall attempt, however, to summarise the more important parts of the discussion.

The resolution was carried unanimously, as a statement of the need for a *nationally organised body*, with local branches as autonomous as was practicable, *specialising* in the propaganda of Independent Working-Class Education. It was pointed out that the classes not being permanent, branches were invaluable as a means of holding keen students together. The general feeling was that *decentralisation with co-ordination* was the ideal policy; and in this connection it was made quite clear that neither the Labour College nor the Plebs League regarded a centralised *authority* as either practicable or desirable.

On the question of the best methods for *promoting classes* various suggestions, new and old, were mentioned, including the circularising of T.U. branches (the desirability of a national circular issued by the Labour College being emphasised both at this point and later); deputations to T.U. branches and Councils; individual propaganda *inside* branches (since secretaries are not always sympathetic and formal correspondence may be shelved!); outdoor propaganda, which often leads to Press report and comment (and advertisement); workshop classes wherever practicable, or informal "talks," discussions, etc., at branch meetings; the necessity of finding out, and arranging for, the special hours best suited to special groups of workers; the establishment of study circles where lecturers were unavailable; the need for getting into touch with Socialist Sunday Schools and the young people attending same; the tactical advantage of concentrating propaganda on the more active sections of the Labour movement (leaving the backward ones to "stew in their own juice" for the time being).

On the question of the *control* of classes, when established, there was a keen discussion as to the relative desirability of retaining Plebs control or handing it over to the working-class bodies interested. Undoubtedly the general feeling was emphatically in favour of the latter course—even were it not practically inevitable, since the working-class bodies would provide the financial support. It was pointed out that the so-called "dangers" of handing over control were largely negated by the fact that in practice such control worked out as *Left Wing control*, only the Left Wingers, as a rule, being keen enough to trouble about educational curricula; and a further safeguard was the adoption of "Soviet" principles by the inclusion on the managing committee of representatives of the *class-students*. The Plebs League, it was generally agreed, could function best as an outside body, offering criticism, suggestions and "ginger."

Local affiliation fees; students' contributions; special donations from organisations or individuals; T.U. branch levies, agitated for by students *inside* their branches; public lectures or social functions, organised by the students acting as a committee; and (again) the desirability of a national appeal circular issued from the centre, were all discussed under the heading of "How financed." Two other useful methods actually being followed in particular districts were (1) T.U. branches supporting the classes to pay for one (or more) delegate student from each branch; (2) Granting of "scholarships" by branches.

The desirability of a regular interchange of reports between the centre and the various districts and classes was endorsed. As headings for a form which might be printed and distributed for regular use, the following were put forward: (1) Average attendance; (2) Subjects studied; (3) Capabilities of lecturer; (4) Reports on local publications of general interest or, contrarily, of publications of special local value. North Eastern class secretaries, it was mentioned, have to report to District H.Q. twice in every session.

There was general enthusiasm for the idea of Summer Schools, wherever and whenever practicable. A summer course for class-lecturers at the Labour College was strongly urged (and again emphasised later when the question of lecturers' employment during the summer months was discussed). It was pointed out that where seaside classes already exist they might act as pioneers of summer school development. Week-end schools and rambling clubs were also suggested as "stepping-stones." And in this connection, as at many other points in the discussion, opportunity was taken to urge Plebs everywhere to make use of the Magazine for notifying activities, etc.

The compilation of a directory of lecturers, with particulars of qualifications, was strongly urged, and its periodical publication in the Magazine recommended; and here both Labour College and Plebs representatives urged class-secretaries to get, and *keep*, in communication with the College and the League centre. With regard to the selection of lecturers, there was a decided feeling *against* any system of examination papers; this method being regarded as a totally inadequate means of finding the men best suited to the work. The experience of the Scottish Labour College was that the local committees were in the best position to judge the capabilities of lecturers, and this appeared to be the general opinion—which underlines the necessity of regular interchange of reports. On the other hand, it was felt that some degree of centralisation was necessary here, in order to standardise qualifications. Other speakers put in a strong plea against the imposition of too high a standard, declaring that the *test principle* was largely responsible for the shortage of tutors; many advanced students, for example, being quite capable of taking charge of elementary classes.

As regards the rates of pay for lecturers, it was felt that too much had been left to voluntarism in the past, and that wherever possible—if only to ensure best results from a lecturer—lecturing should be a whole-time employment, at a rate of pay at least equal to that, say, of an average skilled worker, with additional allowance for special expenses. Where the work must as yet remain voluntary, expenses at least should be paid.

A very definite conclusion was arrived at as a result of the discussion on the employment of lecturers during summer months, viz., that, as a first step towards the provision of a living wage, the central body should be financially responsible for those months, on the basis (1) of arranging for special study courses for lecturers at the College; and (2) of using the services of the lecturers for special

propaganda campaigns in particular districts. Such study courses would be invaluable as "refreshers" for lecturers, and would enable them to compare notes with men doing similar work in varying conditions. The propaganda campaigns could be arranged in conjunction with Trades Councils, local T.U. branches, etc., and would be enormously helpful in preparing the way for winter work, and in breaking fresh ground.

Sunday was mainly occupied with discussion of the Subjects to be regarded as primary and essential. These were finally tabulated as four—Economics, Industrial History, the Science of Understanding, and Economic Geography. The need for a *simple* text-book of economics was generally agreed upon, though certain stalwarts declared that *Capital*, Vol. i, filled the bill—and not over-filled it. Most contributors to the discussion, however, emphasised the difficulties of Marx to ordinary students, and appealed for a simplified text-book which, while embodying all essentials, should still, by careful avoidance of technical phraseology, be within the mental grasp of the elementary student. (T. A. Jackson's plea for "jokes in economics" was heartily applauded.) One useful suggestion put forward was that an Introductory Course, a combination of the main principles of the essential subjects, aiming at defining *the working-class outlook*, should be generally used. The importance of a text-book (and atlas) of Economic Geography was stressed by various speakers (and a pretty programme of work incidentally suggested for the present writer). Other subjects—Trade Union history, political theory, natural science, literature, were touched upon, but it was agreed that these, except in so far as they were included in the four primary subjects above named, were subsidiary from our point of view. Concentration on essentials, rather than a wide "cultural" range, was desirable. A strong plea was made (by A. McManus and others) for a more positive, constructive attitude, in contradistinction to a merely negative, critical point of view. This might perhaps be met by a special course of study arranged under some such heading as "Practical Sociology"; or on the other hand it would, perhaps, best be developed as a *point of view* in relation to all subjects studied. The important fact to be borne in mind was that our education must aim not merely at enabling the workers to understand the present system, but must also fit them to meet and solve the actual administrative problems of a new order which might not be so remote.

The chairman put forward the need for the constant *revision* of text-books, syllabuses, etc., to keep them in touch with current needs; and urged also that we should not disdain to make use of *all* books in any way useful, whether "bourgeois" in origin or not. Regarding "Methods of Presentation," the need for *simplification* as the most urgent need was yet again emphasised; as well as the importance of *correlation* of all subjects studied. Some respective merits of the lecture course and the study-circle methods were compared. Small classes, in which every individual student could play an actual part in questioning and discussion, were favoured as against large "mass" audiences: (1) because of the more thorough study so made possible, and (2) because a small class served at the same time as a training ground for future lecturers. The need for actual research work was pointed out, and Newbold (who has done both) urged that researchers should also teach, since the contact so obtained with the needs of ordinary students was a necessary corrective to "academic" specialisation.

The Magazine, it was generally agreed—especially when enlarged—could be invaluable as a means of publishing new text-books serially, and thus gaining for them wide discussion and criticism before actual publication. The possi-

bility of text-books written jointly by several hands, on the basis of an agreed draft, was considered, and this may be the main subject for discussion at another conference to be held at an early date.

The supply of charts, wall-diagrams, lantern-slides, etc., was agreed to be an urgent "next step," and it was suggested that lecturers or students with sketches or suggestions in this connection should send them without delay to the PLEBS, with a view to "pooling" ideas, and getting to work without delay. *Get into touch with the centre NOW*, and let us make next winter's session far and away the best and biggest yet!

Our best thanks are due to the comrades of the Manchester Labour College, who did their utmost to make the Conference what it undoubtedly was—a big success. *But a successful Conference is of little value unless it results in action.**

J. F. H.

HOW TO READ CAPITAL

[Adapted from a leaflet by A. M. Simons, issued by Kerr and Co., Chicago. Now out of print.]

IN one respect at least Marx's *Capital* deserves comparison with the Christian Bible—it is the most talked about and the least read book among its followers. There are thousands of copies of the first volume of *Capital* among socialists, yet only occasionally is a person found who has really mastered it. The most common explanation of this is that it is extremely hard to understand. To a certain extent this is true. It is true of any great fundamental work. Yet I have seldom found a working man who, if he would take the time to study, could not grasp the Marxian philosophy.

I have found hundreds of readers of Marx, however, who never could get beyond that first chapter. It always seemed to me unfortunate that the logical order of the work determined that this chapter should serve as an introduction. That technical discussion of commodities has proved the undoing of thousands of would-be Marxian students. Yet there are portions of this first volume of *Capital* (and I speak only of this volume at present) that are dramatic and absorbing, with flashes of humour and touches of eloquence that place them well up in the ranks of literature, apart from their argument.

Because of these facts it has been a hobby of mine that if the method of approach were changed it might be made much easier to understand Marx. I am the more led to suggest this idea because all the attempts to popularise *Capital* have been dismal failures. I think I have read nearly all these attempts and believe that the above opinion voices the conclusion of nearly every Marxian student (who has not written such an adaptation or popularisation).

I do not claim that the order of reading which I am about to suggest is preferable as an orderly arrangement of the argument to that left by Marx, but simply that by selecting those portions which are most entertaining and most easily understood, and which are none the less fundamental, as a beginning, the portions which are ordinarily looked upon as extremely difficult of comprehension will have had many of their obscurities cleared away.

I would, therefore, suggest that the reader who is approaching Marx for the first time, begin with Chapter xv of Part IV (p. 365 of English edition). This is the chapter on "Machinery and Modern Industry," and the factory workman at least will find himself at once in the midst of a world with which he is familiar. He will meet the words he uses in his daily work. He will find ideas which have

* Will lecturers and others interested send in at once to the Secretary their views as to the practicability of a week-end conference soon after Easter, say at Leeds or Bradford?

always been within his reach presented to him in a form that will carry infinitely more meaning than they have ever done before, and this is largely the secret of what makes interesting reading. Here he can read the famous definition of a machine which has now become classical and has been accepted (or shall we say stolen, since credit is almost never given) by nearly all the orthodox political economists.

Note in the pages that immediately follow how the introduction of the various forms of motive power has brought corresponding social changes. The four pages following p. 379 (closing the first section of this chapter) are one of the fullest discussions by Marx of the relation of industrial to social changes; in other words of the materialistic interpretation of history. Yet it is seldom referred to by writers on this subject. This whole chapter is illustrative of this method and this fact should be closely borne in mind by the reader. Here, too, we find Marx's discussion of just how machinery "saves labour" and how this saving redounds to the benefit of the capitalist. All this is told with a wealth of illustration that cannot but make it intelligible even to a careless reader.

When this chapter has been read, follow the well-known example of the novel reader and skip everything to the conclusion and see how the plot turns out. Part VIII on the "So-called Primitive Accumulation" is the biography of the capitalist. The eight chapters of which this part is composed constitute a study in industrial history. Whenever an attempt is made to indict the present capitalist we are always told that he secured his capital by "honest" methods and that he should be compensated. No man can read these chapters and not forever realise that even from the point of view of the ethics of capitalism the present owners of the earth can claim no right to their possessions.

This portion of the book moves on majestically in its argument, its summing up of facts, its power of logic, until it culminates in Chapter xxxii, "The Historical Tendency to Capitalist Accumulation." This chapter is one of the great classics of socialism. With the chapter which precedes it, it constitutes an epitome of socialist philosophy. It has a strength of style, a sweep of argument, a prophetic insight, which it would be hard to parallel elsewhere in the world of literature. It has been reproduced many times in socialist writings, but if the reader does not recall it, let him lay this down until he has read these two chapters. They will bear reading again and again and will grow greater and give new meaning each time.

Around these two chapters have been waged the fiercest battles of Marxists and "revisionists." It was against the chapter on "Historical Tendency" that Bernstein directed his heaviest batteries [in the days prior to his recantation of revisionism.] Read it in the light of the facts of industrial development and see how much wiser Marx was than those who wrote almost a generation after him, and were so much the nearer to the facts which he foresaw and to which they were still blind.

The reader who has proceeded thus far will have obtained a fairly good grasp of one phase of the Marxian philosophy—the materialist interpretation of history—especially if he has already read the *Communist Manifesto* and Engels' *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*. If he has not read these works he had better stop at this point and familiarise himself with them. Such a reader will have met with many phrases that he did not understand, but he could skip them without materially interfering with the comprehension of the argument. He will now want to know more of the mechanism of this capitalism whose life history he has traced.

It is the analysis of this mechanism which constitutes Marxian economics. The chapters we have discussed show how capitalism came, and whither it is going. The remainder of the book tells how capitalism operates while it is here. For this reason they are much more difficult to understand. Almost any one can grasp the history of the growth and evolution of electricity as a mechanical force, but only the trained electrician can calculate the methods by which a given electrical mechanism works.

Let us then turn back to the first chapter. Here we are learning the language which will be used throughout this portion of the book. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that we master this first chapter. There are only 55 pages of it and it is well to read it a half dozen times before going on. When we are sure that we know what is meant by a "Commodity," by "Use Value," "Surplus Value," and "Exchange Value," and "Labour Power," we shall find that many of the difficulties that have always confronted us in a study of Marx will have disappeared.

Then read straight on through the book, including the chapters already read, which will fall naturally into their relation with the whole, and not forgetting at the end of each part, to turn back and read those first 55 pages again, to brush up the "vocabulary," as the student of a language would say.

It may be said that this is hard work. Certainly it is. But a mastery of Marx's *Capital* will go far towards supplying a good education in economics and the philosophy of history. You can not expect to get such an education by a few hours' easy reading. Moreover, much of the difficulty of Marx comes from the fact that we have learned to think in terms of capitalist ideology, while Marx demands, as a preliminary to his comprehension, an understanding of proletarian psychology. This explains why he is even more difficult for the college student than for the manual worker, and is practically incomprehensible to the bourgeois reformer.

I have said nothing about the other volumes of Marx, because the person who has mastered Volume One will scarcely need any suggestions on the best method of reading the others.*

A. M. SIMONS

G.B.S.—BETTER DEAD?

[J. M. Barrie once wrote a story describing the activities of a Society whose purpose was to remove distinguished individuals at the height of their powers, before old age or declining powers resulted in their producing work unworthy of themselves. As the point of Lavin's article appears to be that G.B.S. is now a case in point, we have headed his article as above.—Ed. PLEBS.]

SINCE the far-off days when G.B.S. became definitely a British institution many attempts have been made to "explain" the man and his work. This article is an endeavour to show Shaw's position as it appears to one who has studied his more recent pronouncements. We will begin our investigation with his famous *Sunday Chronicle* article—the one which gladdened the hearts of his capitalist patrons by describing Direct Action as "a mug's game."

In that article he expresses his admiration for the leaders of the Labour Party, who, he says, are not miseducated, corrupted, socially entangled and intimidated as our Public School and University pseudo-statesmen are. "In civil statesmanship look, for example, at Mr. Clynes." (Ay, indeed, look at him!). . . . "All the Labour Party men knew that the Russian Revolution must

* *Capital*, Vol. I, has been reprinted and issued by Wm. Glaisner, Ltd., 7s. 6d. Kerr and Co. also publish it, with index added, 10s.

be taken seriously, and that the alternative to Kerensky was not the Grand Duke Nicholas, but Lenin and Trotsky holding Russia together by main force." Here is, indeed, a triumph of civil statesmanship on the part of the Labour men: they knew that the Russian Revolution must be taken seriously. Wonderful! But their freedom from social entanglements enabled them to see more than that—that the alternative to Kerensky was the terrible one of Lenin and Trotsky holding Russia together by force. Not being miseducated, they preferred the loving kindness of Kerensky (as shown by his re-imposition of the death penalty for "desertion" at the front) to the brute force of Lenin and Trotsky, desperately struggling to bring the glorious war to an end. The inference that the uncorrupted Labour Party men are opposed to the use of force (after supporting the Imperialist war for years) is merely a reminder that Shaw is growing old.

But the Front Benches played into Lenin's hands *in spite of Mr. Henderson*, says Shaw regretfully, and the Government precipitated Bolshevism *in spite of Mr. Henderson*. One would think that anyone claiming to be a socialist would be grateful to the Front Benches for playing into Lenin's hands, and would have no admiration to spare for Henderson who endeavoured to prevent the "precipitation" of Bolshevism. The stupidity of the Government which wanted to destroy Lenin but did not know how to do so will readily be conceded; but Henderson's statesmanship or incorruptibility is not apparent. And so far as Shaw is concerned, let us content ourselves by saying that all this does not predispose us to shed tears over his condemnation of Direct Action—since he is obviously likely to be as much "out" in his condemnations as in his commendations.

Let us listen to him on the subject of small nations—one small nation, at all events. Here is a good field for his ingenuity. What line better calculated to endear him to his Imperialist public than to sneer at his native country? He may be seen doing this in his pamphlet, *How to Settle the Irish Question*. The book is a reprint of a series of articles written at the suggestion of the London *Daily Express* in 1917. (The *Express* evidently knew its man!) Again, he appears in the rôle of spokesman of Common Sense. In the introductory note he speaks of the experience already gained in the integration of distinct nations with distinct creeds into a single Power. This sentence alone justifies the *Express'* selection of its spokesman. Why grant independence to small nations when you can "integrate" them into another Power? And when that Power is THE Power, not merely the British Empire, but converted by Fabian camouflage into the Britannic Alliance, what reasonable nation can object?

Let the Irish intransigents take note: "There is not going to be any separation." Ireland will not let England go quite free: "the British military forces are too valuable an asset" (to Ireland!). Comrade Shaw is not sticking at trifles. He regarded it as our "sacred duty" to drive the Germans out of Belgium. As befits a good Imperialist, however, he scouts any suggestion of driving the English out of Ireland. The Belgians who take up arms to resist an invader are putting up an "heroic resistance"; the Irish who do likewise are "heroic ignoramuses." When the British authorities, in approved British style, were slaughtering the leaders (including, of course, the wounded) of the Easter Rebellion, Shaw sneered at the leaders as minor poets. And he actually proposed that the rebel rank and file, taken with arms in their hands fighting (to their eternal credit) against their oppressors, *should be conscribed into the Allied armies, and sent to General Joffre, "with a hint that his right wing needs strengthening."*

Let the "megalomaniac Sinn Feiners" note Shaw's warning that when they federate with the Britannic Alliance (alias the British Empire) Sinn Fein will have to give the Alliance certain guarantees in return for the power and consequence it will have as a member.

But if it begins asking for guarantees that national self-government will not hurt it, it will justify the Scottish officer who said to me impatiently the other day, "Oh, let us give the wretched place (Ireland) its independence, and make it a foreign Power. Then we can conquer it and treat it as a conquered country and have no more nonsense about it." That Scot was a man after my own heart.

The Sinn Feiniest Sinn Feiner of them all will surely quake in his shoes at the bare idea of Ireland being treated as a conquered country. Surely the heroic ignoramuses know that conquest would mean that they would not be allowed to speak their own language nor to sing revolutionary songs; that their elected representatives would be thrown into prison; that newspapers would be suppressed and peaceful public meetings prohibited; that baton and bayonet charges would be almost daily occurrences; and that their political prisoners would have their clothing and their bed-clothes taken from them and be left naked on the stone floors of their cells till they perished. If they know that, and are assured that the impatient fellows who would perpetrate these atrocities are men after Shaw's own heart, perhaps they will heed the distinguished old dramatist's warning and mend their ways. It may be said in passing that the proposal to give a country its independence *so that it can be conquered* is a valuable addition to the existing arrangements for settling international disputes. And it has the merit of being all-British.

Let us extract what consolation we can from the fact that the capitalist class and the British Government, when they want a case put up against Socialism or Irish independence, can find no better spokesman than one who has been a Socialist or one who is of Irish extraction. Judging from the experience of the last few years, such Janizaries will be forthcoming in abundance (provided, of course, that the pay is sufficiently high to attract the "best brains" to that particular kind of work). But it is safe to say that it will be a long time before the warmongers, the conscriptionists, and the oppressors of small nations find an apologist who will serve them as ably as George Bernhardt Shaw.

P. LAVIN

TWO PROLETARIAN POETS.

EVERY revolutionary movement, every revolutionary epoch has produced its poets and its propagandists in verse. The Peasants' Revolt in the fourteenth century produced Piers Plowman; those early Socialists, the Diggers or Levellers during the Civil War and the Cromwellian regime were inspired by the verses of Winstanley; the Chartists were thrilled by the words of Jones and Eliott; to-day we have two poets to inspire us, John S. Clarke and Albert Young.

In dealing with verses written by revolutionary poets, we generally find two classes of poetry; one written simply and solely as propaganda, the other primarily poetry and only incidentally propaganda. Both Clarke and Young have published one book, *Satires, Lyrics and Poems*, and *The Red Dawn* respectively. Each illustrates the point of the preceding paragraph. In reading Clarke one is conscious all the time of a burning and slashing satire on modern life. He never forgets his main object—to make revolutionaries. Young on the

other hand writes poetry which has little to do with propaganda and seems to aim mainly at creating things of beauty, music and cadence.

Most of the poems in *Satires and Lyrics*, published last autumn by the S.L.P., come under the heading "humorous." They are humorous, but not with ordinary humour. Theirs is the grim humour, the bitter laughter of the man who knows and, knowing, wishes to destroy. The ghosts and the stone giants of Capitalism vanish and crumble, as we turn from one iconoclastic poem to another.

Accepting the definition of poetry as music—the music of words—one could hardly describe Clarke's book as poetry. It is satire expressed in the form of verse and one feels that Clarke could have done as well in prose as in poetry. The satirical pieces are easily the best. The poem called "The Record of an Adventurous Life" (A Rhyming Review of Hyndman's Autobiography) is the quintessence of Clarke. For those who know or have seen Hyndman, perhaps the best part of the poem is the line from Shakespeare which heads it:—"There's many a man hath more hair than wit." Clarke describes Hyndman as sent from Heaven to lead the Proletariat:—

. . . I first put Marx and Engels in their places,
By teaching them their economic basis. . . .
From thence I helped old Irving to rehearse,
Taught William Morris how to fashion verse,
('Twas awkward, for he lived at such a distance,
And Gladstone often needed my assistance). . . .

On the other hand it is in such poems as "The Scrap Heap," "Karl Marx," "The Spirit of the Commune," or "The Harlot" that Clarke is seen at his worst. These poems, containing much excellent sentiment though they do, are spoiled by their lack of skill in versification. Indeed, one or two other poems come dangerously near doggerel! There is a certain melancholy pleasure in quoting at this point from "Vitriolic Verses":—

"The softest job on earth, for one of Criticism's apes,
Is to snarl like Æsop's fox did when he couldn't get the grapes."

The value of Clarke's book (and of his work as a whole) lies in the fact that he represents the real vigorous proletarian outlook. He writes with a punch, a verve suitable for the propagandist in the workshop and the factory. Through page after page one is reminded of the roar and force of combat; of the workers attacking, failing and finally demolishing the whole fabric of Capitalist society.

Albert Young finds inspiration in the Proletariat, as a nightingale upon a thorny spray finds inspiration in the sullen dark. As one reads the slim volume, *The Red Dawn, A book of Verse for Revolutionaries and Others*, one feels the beauty of the poems almost predominating over their revolutionary ardour. Clarke's poems move the reader to indignation at things as they are. Young's poems move one almost to tears by their beauty of form and the thought enshrined in them. As an example we quote from a poem entitled "Madonna of the Pavement":—

He told her all; for her suffice
He had no bed, and so she said,
"Here, mate, take this, 'tis half my price,
And get yourself to bed."

Reading a poem like "An Impression" one regrets that the poet has not given more space in his book to poetry dealing with poetic form and thought itself:—

Slowly, a boat comes in,
Looming large and grey,
The captain claps the trumpet to his mouth—
"A-hoy!"
His voice sings out within my Soul,
But 'tis—O! so far away.
From the deep sea, deep night, and
Deeper, deeper silence
Slowly, the boat comes in.

When one remembers that these lines are written by a proletarian amidst the soul-destroying surroundings of a London slum, one can surely feel pride in their force and beauty. In such poems as "In the Doss House," "The Fanatic," "The Gad-Fly," and many others one sees the poet as well as the propagandist. The joy and beauty of life is here portrayed as an ideal for revolutionaries to strive towards and to reach.

In so far as Young and Clarke strive to create revolutionary feeling they are propagandists; in so far as they portray ideals and sentiments they are poets. Each succeeds along both of these lines in varying degrees, and succeeding, creates something not only worth reading but worth spreading among our fellows.

HAROLD W. EDWARDS

HEALTH: SOCIAL AND INDIVIDUAL

IF we examine diseases and their causes, we find that there have always been certain definite laws regulating the incidence of the bulk of disease and premature death. Just as the Materialistic Conception of History explains the origin of the changes in marriage customs, of political parties, of religious beliefs, etc., so does it explain the origin of diseases, the methods of fighting them, and the reason why certain diseases are scarcely fought at all.

We should recognise that all disease is at present explained as an abnormal arrangement of the material comprising the human body. Such derangement is due to heredity or environment, or to a combination of these two factors. Proletarian medical science will rest on the study of those factors, recognising as of supreme importance that what conditions the great bulk of environment is the method of production and distribution in vogue in each period. The historical mission of the workers, namely, the socialisation of all material wealth and knowledge, includes a health mission of stupendous magnitude and hope. When such social and economic revolution has taken place and developed, we shall find a tremendous drop in the death-rate, a drop not of 1 or 2 per cent., but of a percentage which will be counted in tens and twenties.

For example, the disappearance of prostitution from Soviet Russia will cause a marked diminution of syphilis and its resulting diseases. General paralysis of the insane, locomotor ataxia, and aneurism of aorta, are now considered to be almost invariably preceded by syphilis. These all cause premature death and are distinctly hopeless from the point of view of curative treatment. Such prevention can only occur by means of a social and economic revolution.

In order to "localise" our subject I will consider chiefly the incidence of premature death, although such laws are applicable to non-killing disease also. We should define a person dying prematurely as one who does not live to 70 years

or more. The all-embracing law is that the great mass of disease and premature death found in any period is caused by the method of production and distribution in vogue in that period. For example, tubercular disease was probably non-existent previous to the domestication of cattle; or if it did exist it could not have been spread, as at present, largely by tubercular milk and meat. Cattle are probably frequently tubercular because of the bad conditions under which they live. Such bad conditions we know are caused by the aim of the producer to produce for exchange value and not for use value. (It would be interesting to know if the Amer-Indians were tubercular-free previous to the landing of Europeans or their cattle. Mexico was conquered largely by a disease new to the natives, viz., smallpox—imported unintentionally by the Spaniards.)

If we examine any period we find that the *scourge* form exists because the method of production and distribution causes it to exist, (i) by actually originating it, or (ii) by hindering the spread and development of knowledge (and material) which would enable men to combat it. *Sporadic* forms of disease, on the other hand, are constantly being potentially or actually diminished by the ever-increasing control over nature which man is acquiring. Such *potential* diminution does not always take place, because the action necessary would endanger the current method of production and distribution. For example, it is commonly recognised that a chief source of syphilis is the economic position of many women. To give women economic freedom would cut out of society a large part of the scourge form of venereal disease. But it would also endanger Capitalism. The same with tuberculosis, due to bad houses, overcrowding, over-work, under-pay, insanitary byres, tubercular cattle, tubercular milk and meat, sole emphasis being put on the exchange value of milk and meat instead of the use value. The same with broncho-pneumonia, measles, whooping-cough, etc., for has not a Government pamphlet recently proved that there is 50 per cent. more respiratory disease in back-to-back houses than in houses with through ventilation?

The foregoing has proved, very inadequately I am afraid, that health laws exist and are as fixed and definite as any other scientific law. I hope Marxian socialists will be encouraged to analyse the causes of disease and death, not merely for propaganda purposes, but also for constructive work when the time comes.

G. ROBERTSON

STUDENTS' PAGE

ECONOMICS

Question 1

Can an employer recoup, or even more than recoup, himself for increased wages by increasing prices?

Answer.—Emphatically no. If an employer could raise prices at will why should he wait for the occasion of a wage advance to do it, and why does he invariably oppose such demands? Apart from abnormal monopoly conditions competition determines prices and not the arbitrary will of any employer. A *temporary* increase in prices may follow a wage advance by: (1) An increased demand for necessities, from the increased purchasing power of the workers, which may for a time force prices up until the supply is again increased; (2) Producers in rivalry may be selling their commodities below their price of production [*i.e.*, the cost of production and average rate of profit]. With their

eyes upon each other they may mutually make the time of a general wage advance the occasion for selling their commodities at, or nearer to, the price of production. [The Sankey Bonus payment produced a marked rise in the price of clothes and food in many mining towns.] These temporary results of the possible coincidence of higher prices from other causes with a wage advance mislead people to put the cart before the horse. It is prices which first soar and which the wage is slowly and painfully made to follow. It is quite possible, however, for wages in a particular industry to increase while the price of the commodity it produces decreases. **Relative wages** can be increased only at the expense of profits; hence the resistance to wage demands.

The uses of the Vicious Circle argument to the employers are manifold:

(1) The true causes of increased prices—decreasing value of gold, inflation of currency

and abnormal conditions giving monopoly prices—are concealed, and one section of the workers is blamed by other sections for this effect.

(2) It tends to stop wage demands and thus blunts the edge of the workers' demand for the retention of the same or the winning of a higher standard of life.

(3) It assumes that profits are sacrosanct, and diverts attention from the fact that the worker is exploited in production and that monopoly prices are possible only because production is controlled by the capitalist in whose hands the commodity remains for circulation.

HISTORY

Question 1

If it is maintained that ideas are determined by material conditions, how can such things as the vision of Joan of Arc be explained?

Answer.—Like most of the supposed "contradictions" to the M.C.H., this example is conveniently far away. If a person had a dream or a vision nowadays, he would explain it as a temporary delusion caused by a heavy meal or some such reason. But in the Dark Ages, to be itself understood as a relapse into a lower form of economic life, boundless credulity and complete absence of the scientific spirit prevailed; the miraculous was not the exception but the rule; and a belief in dreams and sorcery dominated. Then again, in the content of the unfortunate girl's hallucination was the very material fact of the English invasion (that, too, only to be explained by the fighting expansive tendencies of

feudalism). If some supernatural force, independent of conditions, was responsible for her vision, there is no reason why she should not have dreamt of the Women's Suffrage movement or of Soviets. If we want to explain why one particular individual suffers from delusion and insanity and not others, then, as in the case of individual inventive or poetic genius, biologic, psychic, environment and hereditary factors have to be considered.

Question 2

In making class distinctions, divisions and struggles the primary factors in social development, what place do you give to racial genius or the vagaries of individual temperament?

Answer.—A very secondary place, because while racial characteristics tend to disappear or to blend the class division grows deeper and more apparent with every passing year. Racial differences of form, colour and temperament can be traced back to natural environment. Difference in individual temperaments is a complex of personal environment and education, and the nature of the mind (to be investigated by the psychologist). But greater than the influence of natural and personal environment are the consequences arising from tool using and the class struggle over tool ownership. Differences of race or individual temperament may hasten or retard for a while the effects of the economic forces, or make their recognition quick or slow, but their existence and dominance over the mass of men of all races and temperaments are undeniable.

MARK STARR

CORRESPONDENCE

"ERGATOCRACY"

DEAR COMRADE,—T. A. Jackson's objection to the word "ergatocracy" is puerile. Because certain universities or schools have devoted undue attention to the study of the classical languages, there is no reason why they should retain a monopoly. Language is for all time and all people, if the people care to avail themselves of it.

Latin and Greek are international languages among scientists. Neither Plebs nor anybody else will ever alter that. And those same languages will always be valuable for coining new words and enriching our own vocabulary.

Yours fraternally,

W. G. E. P

THOSE TWO MARXS

DEAR COMRADE,—I should much like to hear a little more from E. and C. P. about those "two Marxes" to whom they referred in their review of J. W. Scott's book last month; especially about the "non-revolutionary Marx," who, one gathers, did not think or, at any rate, did not think very far. Criticism of Marx is all too rarely helpful or stimulating, but this tantalisingly brief sentence of E. and C. P.'s did hold out the hope of something interesting at the back of their minds. Can we have it?

Yours fraternally,

MONIST

"THE PLEBS" AND MR. MACDONALD

DEAR COMRADE,—As an admirer of THE PLEBS, I was sorry to see in this month's issue a very substantial return (quantitatively) to the attack on Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. This inter-necine strife is folly. The aim of THE PLEBS, I believe, is to spread the gospel of Independent Working-Class Education. One might be led to think that its work had been accomplished, and the enemy "definitively" defeated, since it could afford room for attacks upon soldiers (old and tried soldiers at that) in our own regiment who are yet unable to march in perfect step to our tune. I would not for a moment presume to dictate PLEBS policy, but I do feel that never in the history of the world proletariat was there more need for concentrating all our strength, not merely a part of it, against our common enemy.

Yours fraternally,

A MARXIST

[THE PLEBS, as our correspondent observes, is out to spread the gospel of Independent Working-Class Education. It is bound to criticise critics of that gospel. Mr. MacDonald, being one of these, comes in for his share. It is not a case, in short, of his being unable "to march in perfect step with our tune." He does not march in our regiment. And if our information as to a recent speech of his (at Newcastle) is correct, our correspondent might suggest to Mr. MacDonald that "inter-necine strife is folly."—Ed. PLEBS.]

SOVIET v. DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION

DEAR COMRADE,—Andrew Rothstein is somewhat unfortunate in the title of his article, for surely no form of administration could be more democratic than the Soviet.

There is nothing mysterious about Soviets. They are a Russian version of Industrial Unionism. Lenin himself pays tribute to De Leon as the foremost advocate of the principle upon which the Russian Soviets are based. The S.L.P. from its inception has advocated Industrial Unionism as the right structure for Labour to adopt, not only as a means to an end, but as the framework of the new social order.

Although defective in its organisation and narrow in its outlook, the workers have not yet realised the obsolete character of Trade Unionism, and they tended to look upon Industrial Unionism as a foreign innovation. Their leaders, clinging to office, saw in it the end of their own power, so they promptly proclaimed it as a move to divide the ranks of Labour. When the history of the British Labour movement comes to be written it will be found that it has been one long struggle of the workers to gain control of their own affairs.

Soviets and Industrial Unionism are one and the same thing; and the Workshop Committee movement is yet another manifestation of the same fundamental principles, recognising as it does the common interests of the workers in any given industry, and precluding those craft divisions which have been so disastrous. Moreover, the Workers' Committee form of organisation fits the workers to control industry, giving them not only the necessary initiative, but correlating the processes of production.

No capitalist Government to-day has the unanimous support accorded by the masses of Russia to the Soviet administration. Naturally, those who lived in "purple ease" do not view such an administration with complacency, and it is to

them that we owe the tall stories of Bolshevik atrocities. Even amongst these, however, there are not a few instances of those who had previously lived by exploitation having been won over to the support of the Soviets, merely from the standpoint of economy.

One feels at times almost too annoyed to discuss the ridiculous objections to the Soviet form of administration—so simple in its working—especially when such objections come from persons of no low intelligence. One is driven to wonder whether they spring from an honest intention to aid in the solution of the social problem. Sometimes the motive may be a Churchillian idea that Labour is not fit to conduct national affairs of life—as if wage-labour did not practically run the bulk of capitalist industry! Mr. J. R. MacDonald, in the current issue of the *Socialist Review*, deploras the inability of our capitalist rulers to grasp the Russian situation. "How different," he remarks, "would the position be now, had we kept up informal relations with Russia, allowed Litvinoff to remain here, recognised the independence of the new border States, and helped them to maintain their original intentions to form federations, and protected ourselves against Bolshevik propaganda in open political ways in a spirit of firmness but of dignity," etc.

And in the same issue of the *Review* he has the effrontery to publish an article by Mme. Lenin on Adult Education in Russia! One wonders how Mme. Lenin will appreciate appearing (in print) in such company! The recent declaration of the Scottish I.L.P. is a joyful sign of returning courage on the part of some at least of the members of that Party.

All power to the Soviets and their British counterpart, the Shop Stewards and Workshop Committee movement!

Yours fraternally,

F. L. RIMINGTON

WORKING-CLASS EDUCATION IN FRANCE

THE Socialist Marxian School at Paris (49 Rue de Bretagne) is open to men and women alike, irrespective of political party. The entrance fee is one franc, and the dues one franc monthly. Lectures are held at the School twice a week—on Sundays at 10 a.m., and on Thursdays at 8.45 p.m. Communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Dr. Gрабоis, 50 Rue des Francs-Bourgeois, Paris (3e).

From *La Populaire* of December 14, 1919, we learn that the following systematic study course has been worked out. Competent lecturers and professors (e.g., Paul Louis, Bracke, Mayeras, Ch. Rappoport, Ch. Seignobos, Professor Gide, etc.) have promised their collaboration in the carrying out of those parts of the programme for which they are respectively qualified.

I.—Doctrines

- 1 Primitive Communism and the Republic of Plato.
- 2 Christian Socialism in the Middle Ages.
- 3 Social movements of the Reformation.
- 4 Social romances: Thomas More, Campanella, *Atlantis*, Fenelon.

- 5 Social ideas of the xviii century.
- 6 Social doctrines of the French Revolution.
- 7 Saint-Simon and Saint-Simonism.
- 8 Fourier and Proudhon.
- 9 The Socialists of 1848: Louis Blanc, Cabet, Leroux, Buchez.
- 10 Karl Marx. Engels, Lassalle and the Marxian school.
- 11 Revisionism.
- 12 The Social Revolution.

II.—Institutions

- 1 The pre-capitalist period.
- 2 The Middle Ages. Feudal property.
- 3 The French Revolution and private property.
- 4 Capitalist evolution.

III.—The Working-Class and Socialist Movement

Different historical forms and methods of the class struggle.

- 1 First revolutionary Communist movements. Babœuf and Babouvism.
- 2 Blanqui and the secret societies under the Empire.

- 3 The Trade Unions and the organised labour movements in different countries.
- 4 The Revolution of 1848.
- 5 The first International.
- 6 The Commune.
- 7 The second International (1889-1914).
- 8 The political party of the working-class.
- 9 The Co-operative movement.
- 10 Revolutionary Syndicalism.
- 11 Reformist and revolutionary socialism.
- 12 Anarchist Communism.
- 13 Bourgeois individualism and revolutionary individualism.
- 14 Bolshevism.
- 15 Dictatorship and democracy.
- 16 Socialism and the State.
- 17 The Soviets.

IV.—General Culture

Philosophy

- 1 Various philosophical doctrines.
- 2 Greek philosophy.
- 3 xviii-century philosophy.

- 4 Modern philosophy.

History

- 1 History of Labour.
- 2 The French Revolution.
- 3 The political revolution of the six century.
- 4 The present social revolution.
- 5 Origins of the world-war (1914).
- 6 General conceptions of History. Idealist and Materialist Conceptions.

Arts

- 1 Social drama.
- 2 Social novels.
- 3 Literature and the war.

Sciences

- 1 Evolution
- 2 The new theory of matter.

Ethics.

- 1 The doctrine of Epicurus and the Stoic school.
- 2 Religion and morality.
- 3 A criticism of class morality.
- 4 Socialist morality.

A. F. R.

REVIEWS

THE I.L.P. WAKES UP
A Short Primer of Industrial History. By W. Riddick. (I.L.P., 6d.)

WE welcome this little work as a practical indication that the I.L.P. is awaking to the need for working-class education, and intends to furnish its members with something rather more lasting in value than criticisms of current events. To borrow the phraseology of the evangelist, "growing in grace" should follow "conversion." Socialism is more than a momentary enthusiasm, a mere "agin the Government" agitation, or an impetuous revolt against immediate wrongs. It has implications which bring totally new conceptions of society and its development; in morality and philosophy also it makes a definite break with old ideas.

There is nothing striking about the modest essay our comrade has presented in these 39 pages, tracing the growth of class-consciousness up to modern times, advocating workshop control as something superior to mere nationalisation, and pointing to industry unionism and the Triple Alliance as capable of being made the way out of wage-slavery.

In criticism, it might be said that his definition of a chattel slave (p. 4) "compelled to give a certain portion of his time to his owner, and, during the remainder, to provide for himself" would be truer of a serf, whose rent of service was certainly greater than the rent in kind or money in the early days of feudalism.

The date 1843 given (p. 29) in connection with the Laws of Settlement is probably an oversight, as these began in 1662 and after repeated alterations were mitigated in 1834 to such an extent as almost to abolish them. Again, trade unions ante-dated the dark period of the Industrial Revolution; the germ had taken root before in the "sense of defensive comradeship" provoked by the effects of the preceding manufacture.

The message of history has been well found by

our author to be: "Only a fundamental revolution in the control of industry can bring real liberty to the wage-earning class." M. S.

H. G. WELLS' OUTLINE

The Outline of History (Newnes, Parts 4 and 5, 1s. 2d. each) has reached a particularly interesting stage, and Wells will be responsible for a good many delayed meals in the homes of our history-class students. A mass of material has been accumulated in recent years about the earlier civilisations, but it has mainly been "made public" only in a technical sense—in books and at a price outside the pockets and the ken of ordinary men. We get the "guts" of it here, admirably summarised and graphically illustrated—jointly effective methods which cannot fail to fix its main outlines on the mind. A combination of broad generalisation and well-chosen illustration is an ideal method of tuition in history. One appreciates Wells' compliment to J.F.H. in the *Observer* (18.1.20)—"the best man in his line"—by glancing at such a map as "The Cradle of Western Civilisation" (p. 103) or the time chart summarising the salient features of the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages (p. 111).

The chapter on "Sea Peoples and Trading Peoples" contains interesting matter on the Aegean civilisation, which preceded the Greek in the Mediterranean; and that on "Writing" gives one a glimpse of the difficulties in the way of accurate historical estimates. The evolution of Castes and Classes, dealt with in Chapters xix and xx, is a fascinating subject, and tempts one to discussion of all sorts of points, great and small. But surely Wells is pulling our leg when he implies (p. 157) that anybody ever thought of the *solidarity of labour* as a fact of every stage of historical development. That solidarity, as he quite rightly observes, was "a new idea and a new possibility" only after the mechanical revolution of the 19th century A.D. And it was a *new idea* then, because then for the first time in history had social development made it a *possibility*. G. S.

THE ROSES AND RAPTURES OF REUBEN.
*Unconventional Approaches to Adult Education:
 Our School among the Hills and Hedgerows.*
 (W.E.A. 2d.)

At the W.E.A. Convention at Nottingham last October, the Chairman of the Western District, Mr. Reuben George, let himself go; and the ensuing rhetoric has been published in pamphlet form.

Reuben, who says he is "out for the sunshine and the roses," exhorts us to go out into the hedgerows and pluck an apron full; he says the road has been sad lately, but that he is now out to lead the way to the cornfields; also that the W.E.A. can "ring the joy bells and that none can do it better." What it all means is rather a puzzle, but there is no holding Reuben when he gets going. His line is careless joy—for Cowper says, "God made the country, man made the town." All very well, Reuben, but what we want to know is who made the W.E.A., and what for?

One gathers that the main occupation of the W.E.A. (Western District) is "rambling." Their programme shows 25 rambles and two or three side shows, including one Bishop. "How noble the bishop was and how inspiring the story was." (He told them—there were 400 of them—about Alfred the Great, and one hopes he was strictly impartial.) The 400, says Reuben, were as good a crowd as you would have found anywhere. "Our men (he adds) keep their sweetheating up. It was a glorious day. Wasn't it splendid of a good Berkshire farmer to send four milk churns full of beautiful hot water?" It seems to us wonderfully appropriate, and we suspect that farmer of a sense of humour. Reuben says they "quenched a thirst that angels would have envied." [Tut! tut!!] "It was a lovely thirst, glorious to realise. Solomon could easily have said as he looked at that happy party that he was miles off being arrayed like one

of these." One cannot resist wondering what Solomon (who may also be said to have kept his sweetheating up) would have said to "four milk churns full of beautiful hot water."

Another time they visited "that splendid and good man, Lord Haldane," who asked them "What is truth?" But Reuben does not report their answer. Yet another adventure that brought tears to our eyes was a visit to—can you guess?—as symbolically appropriate a venue as one could imagine for a W.E.A. outing! *An old village fire engine!* When one thinks about it that is just what the W.E.A. is—a somewhat antiquated fire engine. So they went and gazed at it, and listened to some "clean" folk lore (specially bowdlerised for W.E.A. consumption?) and danced and sang, and then gave three cheers for everybody! Impartial, you see, to the bitter end.

If you are wondering what all this has to do with adult education, you must understand that "education in comradeship" is what the Western District W.E.A. believes in. "The skilled worker and the labourer come out on our rambles, but the fellowship is so strong that *the class difference is obliterated!*" "Perhaps some of our friends may be disposed to disagree with me," Reuben adds, "when I say I never allow the class war to enter my breast." That's right, Reub, keep the class war in its place!

The pamphlet ends in a welter of dance, song, village band, roses everywhere, countryside, love, comradeship, poetry. . . . "Friends, if we must go to Heaven, let us go through the fields wherever we can," (and incidentally "watch the girls getting over stiles"—fie, Reuben!) But what if one objects to rambling to Heaven in four hundreds, led by a sort of watered-down Blatchford? And, anyhow, what is the precise value of Reuben's raptures to the organised Labour Movement?

WINIFRED HORRABIN

THE PLEBS BOOKSHELF

WHY, correspondents sometimes ask, does THE PLEBS so persistently and interminably rage at the W.E.A.? Why not give it a rest? Why bother about it at all?

Well, one reason why we must not weary in criticism, even at the risk of boring our readers, lies before me now in the shape of a pamphlet by Mr. MacTavish, *Education in Its Relation to Labour and Industry* (W.E.A., 4d.), being an address delivered at a Convention of Employers and Employed held at Birmingham last year. There are innumerable passages in this pamphlet asking for comment. I must select a few of the more interesting, and then refrain.

At the outset it is refreshing to find Mr. MacTavish admitting that "an entirely disinterested discussion" of the relation of Education to the Industrial Problem "is impossible"; since "on this question, and probably in all other social questions, we are each and all biased." That at all events is a step in the right direction, and if Mr. MacTavish goes on like this we shall have him next promising to be candid, but not impartial. But he does not go quite so far this time. He has been taking a course of psychology, and

quotes chapter and verse for the impressive-sounding declaration that "our opinions on social and industrial questions are no more than the rationalisation of biases. Hence the importance of cultivating good biases." If, in short, you have a crude working-class bias which prejudices you against the existing order, cultivate a governing-class outlook, and your prejudices and discontents will vanish. Sort of Christian Science method applied to Labour Unrest!

But not only are your opinions on such subjects merely psychological manifestations; the industrial problem itself is primarily psychological. For long, says Mr. MacTavish, "I held the opinion that . . . it was an economic problem . . . that a study of it should begin with a study of industrial history, economic theory, etc. . . . I can see now that that opinion is erroneous, and that the industrial problem is primarily psychological." Out of industrial development "there has grown up a working-class psychology . . . an emotional disposition of the working-class towards the industrial system." And all you have to do is to change, not the system, but the "emotional disposition"! You may not believe me, but this is really and truly MacTavish's solution.

"What is called class-consciousness," he says, "intensified, strengthened and rationalised by history, conflict and conference, is the kernel of the industrial problem." And you—by education—are to transmogrify this class-consciousness into something nicer, something more "in the interest of the community," while leaving the "conflict" to go on—or will it give place to "conference"? . . . We must beware of idealising a class. "If we do, we will reap what we sow in a class war." (To his credit be it set down that Mr. MacTavish refrains from dragging in Bolshevism.) Our greatest need is a "common human culture," and—no discussion of our problem is complete without a consideration of the part education should play in solving *our most urgent and immediate industrial problem—increased production.*" All you have to do in that respect is to cultivate a bias in favour of "willingness" on the part of the workers! Q. E. F. All this is from a man who can see that "goodness . . . has no reality apart from social relations"; that "good conduct or tendencies to good behaviour are social products or community values." "Our problem, therefore, is"—to pretend they are *not* social products at all, but psychological phenomena capable of fundamental alteration without any preceding change in social relations! It is the very fine flower of muddledom.

There is some reference later on to working-class suspicion of the bias of Universities, and the consequent *growing demand* for "what is called independent working-class education, with a definitely Marxian bias." This sort of "dogmatic instruction posing as education" (the old familiar phrases!) "engenders the fighting spirit of fanaticism" and makes "orderly progress extremely difficult."

The long and the short of it is, my friends, that, according to Mr. MacTavish, you can choose your bias—University or Marxian. And if you're moved by the working-class "fighting tradition that is beginning to appeal to working men and women with even greater force than the history of the national struggle" (Mr. MacTavish's words) you won't be long in making up your mind!

* * * * *

Democracy and the Press, by F. H. Hayward and B. N. Langdon-Davies (I.L.P. Library, 1s. 6d.), though it contains some interesting matter and effective writing, is yet the unsatisfactory sort of book one has grown accustomed to see published by the National Labour Press. That is to say, it is "Radical" in tone, well enough so far as it goes, but that is not nearly far enough for a book issued by a supposedly Socialist publishing house. Its criticisms of a corrupt Press are those of honest intellectuals of a liberal cast of mind. There is nothing distinctively Socialist in it. And I repeat, that is all too typical of the works included in the N.L.P. book-lists.

True, the authors show very effectively how the Press is "the chief organ for the preservation at all costs of the existing order of society." They describe in telling phrases the process by which a group of financial magnates interested in some particular "development" scheme can purchase

a London journal, engineer a "stunt," attack anybody likely to be opposed to their plans, set ten thousand readers talking, and being "probably not without influence in Government circles, point to *this rising tide of public opinion*—and the rest follows." It is useful matter for industrialists—who hear a good deal about this self-same "public opinion" when an inconvenient strike is looming.

Nevertheless, Messrs. Hayward and Langdon-Davies remain "intellectuals" rather than Socialist critics—and somewhat innocent and trustful intellectuals at that. Their complaint, for instance, of lack of humour in one of Mr. Bottomley's posters is evidently made in blissful ignorance of the fact that the words in question formed the first line of a not too polite Limerick well-known to ordinary men in the street. A more serious example of their Utopian trustfulness is their naive pleasure at Captain Guest's Government scheme for the official supply of "trustworthy material on which a sound judgement may be formed on social and economic questions," including "impartial" information on causes of Labour Unrest. Would Socialists—working-class educationists, at any rate—be quite so trustful? . . . Truly, as our authors point out, Education is the only real remedy for the illegitimate influence of the modern Press. But it will be Education not so much in "Taste, in Ideals, in a sense of Proportion"—which is the kind suggested by them—as in the facts of modern society; the society which makes such a Press inevitable.

One other small point. A book like this which, with biggish type and liberal spacing, only totals 76 pp. and sells at 1s. 6d., makes it apparent that our PLEBS text-books (Craik, 150 pp., 1s. 6d.; Starr, 200 pp., 2s.) are value for money!

* * * * *

The Secretary of the Labour College asks me to mention that supplies of the new edition of Mr. and Mrs. Webb's *Trade Unionism* are expected about the end of this month. . . . Also that the translation by Mainwaring of Plekhanoff's *Evolution of Economic Theories*, which appeared in the November and December PLEBS, has been issued by the College as an 8-page pamphlet. Price 1d., usual reduced terms for quantities.

* * *

We owe an apology to A.P.L. for overlooking an obvious error in the proof of his translation of Lunatcharsky last month. The date in the footnote should have been 1918—not 1912.

J. F. H.

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