

Vol. XI. No. 11

December 1919

THE PLEBS

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THE PLEBS

"I can promise to be candid but not impartial"

Vol. XI.

December, 1919.

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WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?

WE need make no apology for concerning ourselves so largely in this issue with our own affairs. Three weeks ago the Annual Meet of the Plebs League was held, and the matters discussed were, we make bold to maintain, of sufficient importance to justify adequate report and comment in these pages. If you were present at the Meet you may care to refresh your memory by glancing over the Report on page 196. If you were not—and the chances are that you were not, since the Meet, though a good one, represented only a small fraction of our friends and supporters—please turn to the Report and give it your serious attention and consideration before proceeding with this heart-to-heart talk

Having paused while you do this we put the question to you straight—"What are you going to do about it?"

You are probably replying—"What do you want me to do about it?"

The aim of this conversation being nothing if not strictly utilitarian, we propose to indicate one or two of the things we hope you will do. And though we can't afford to enclose a stamped addressed envelope in every copy of the PLEBS, we do hope you will continue the conversation, so to speak, by writing us at once and letting us know just how—and how much—you feel about it.

You have read the Report, and are, therefore, fairly well-informed as to just how things stand, both in regard to the League, and the Magazine. Let us take the League first.

You are interested in Independent Working-Class Education, or you wouldn't trouble to read the PLEBS. Are you a member of the Plebs League? The Plebs League is the pioneer propagandist organisation in that field. It is, moreover, the only

organisation concerned wholly and solely with independent working-class education. Do you support it—to the extent of an annual subscription of one shilling? You are, we trust, a member of a Trade Union. You are probably also enrolled on the books of a political organisation. Isn't working-class education, isn't the work which a propagandist body can do in that direction, worth a bob a year to you? Very likely you are murmuring something about the number of calls on your purse. Quite so. We, too, have a purse—and calls. But, we repeat, you are interested in working-class education, and you evidently sympathise with our point of view. Then why not enrol as a member of the organisation which stands for the thing you are interested in, and which, given adequate backing, is ready to lay itself out to carry on educational propaganda more effectively than ever before?

Maybe you are a class-student. Then why not join an organisation that can serve as a link between classes all over the country, and which—again, if adequately backed—can achieve the co-ordination of work which is so desirable? An organisation which exists to recruit more students—and, ultimately, to provide more teachers.

Or perhaps you are interested primarily in the Labour College, and your attitude is that, the College now being safely and firmly established, with two big Unions behind it, there is now little need for such an organisation as the Plebs League. But is the College—necessarily—quite so safe? Financially, yes, of course. But not necessarily "safe" in every respect. In fact, it is not nearly "safe" enough to suit some people. Listen to this—from the *Yorkshire Observer* (October 25):—

Outside the Labour movement few are aware of the existence of two Labour colleges, and still fewer realise how deeply they influence the policy of the movement. Reference to them is topical at the moment, because *there is a suggestion afoot for their amalgamation*. Ruskin College is not, of course, regarded by its supporters, who are numerous and influential, as a propagandist organisation. But a good deal of obscurity surrounds the other institution, known as the Central Labour College, whose friends are less influential than numerous, and whose activities are avowedly propagandist. It is from the C.L.C. that the small and mobile army of active young propagandists is recruited, who, among the miners and the railwaymen, as well as the engineers, carry on an intensive campaign for the propagation of advanced industrial ideas, tending very markedly in the direction of industrial democracy. . . .

The Ruskin College, on the other hand, is much less revolutionary in spirit. . . . It must be confessed there does not seem to be much common ground between the two institutions, but *there is, nevertheless, a disposition to unite; and informal discussions of the possibility of a rapprochement have already started*. . . .

Interesting item of intelligence, is it not? Amalgamation with Ruskin—the pass to be sold at the very moment of victory! *Whose* is the "disposition to unite," and *who* is taking part in the "informal discussions?" We can't inform you. You know as much about it as we do—and have probably heard whispers of the same sort before. There may be nothing in it—or there may be a lot. But, anyhow, isn't the Plebs League needed—to guard what, after years of hard work, it has at last won? Isn't it vitally necessary that an organisation standing for the aims and policy with which the College was founded, should be in existence to keep a watchful eye on all developments, and to see to it that those aims and that policy are in no way modified?

Join the League.

And we want you not only to join, but to work for us. Get in touch with other members, and get a branch started. You need meet no oftener than is necessary, but *get in touch*, lay plans for propaganda, send word to us how we can assist; and make yourself an agent for the sale of the Magazine.

The Magazine. What about it? You have read the Secretary's and Editor's reports. How does the 6d. 48-pp. monthly strike you? We want to know—at once; and to know what number you can guarantee.

Being naturally conservative, as all of us are, you murmur—"Why not leave things as they are? What's the matter with the Magazine as it is? Sixpence is a lot of money, etc., etc."

Well, if you've been a *friend* of ours, you've probably paid, to special appeal funds and the like, a good deal more than an average of 6d. a month in the past. (And if you haven't it's time you started.) We want to delete the special appeals, and make the Magazine a self-supporting proposition. What is more, we intend to do it—or go out of business altogether, being tired of living on charity.

This is why we want to go up to 48 pages—and to do it not later than the month after next. We have to try to meet two or three separate sets of requirements:—
 (1) We want to propagate the general idea of Independent Working-Class Education—*i.e.*, to state it in terms that will appeal to the man who's never considered the subject before—to the plain Trade Unionist, whose interest we want to gain.
 (2) We want to provide useful material—syllabuses, study courses, hints on reading, etc., etc., for the class-student; for the Trade Unionist, that is, who's begun to be interested in what we're out for, and looks to us for help and encouragement.
 (3) We've got to provide matter for the more advanced student or reader, who looks to us to supply him with reviews and discussions of the subjects of interest to *him*, but which are a bit steep for the beginner.

Well, you can *not* do all these things in 24 pages. We've tried, and we know. With 48 there's a chance. But with 24, no. If we make the more elementary appeal the old guards sniff and say "The PLEBS is getting rather childish lately." If we cater for them, the beginner (rightly) says—"Give us a chance," or "Draw it mild." We repeat, a 48-page magazine is *essential*, and if you can't trust us to give you value for money (not so expensive as a seat at the pictures!) then write and say so, and we'll remove your name from our books—and your memory from our hearts.

Now what we want you to do is (1) to sit down and say you'll send on shortly a year's subscription to the enlarged Magazine; and (2) send us the names of any of your pals who you think *ought* to take the PLEBS, and we'll send them a leaflet—or, better still (because more economical), we'll send the leaflets to you, and you can press them home, with a few homely objurgations thrown in.

The League has got to *boom*. The Magazine has got to do ditto. Our address is on the front cover. Don't delay writing to tell us how it all strikes you.

And please, in all seriousness, remember that a little group of men and women at the centre *cannot* carry on a propagandist organisation or a propagandist organ without active and enthusiastic assistance from their friends. Re-read the Secretary's appeal (in the Report of the Meet) and then ask yourself—"What am I going to do about it?"

J. F. H.

IMPORTANT

As we go to press we receive the following from the Labour News Service (Nov. 22nd):—

"The Council of the Northumberland Miners' Association has decided to put forward a proposal to the Miners' Federation suggesting that the Trade Union Congress Parliamentary Committee should take over and run as Trade Union Colleges the Central Labour College and Ruskin College. The former, as is well known, is directly financed and controlled by the S.W.M.F. and the N.U.R., and the suggestion has been made that the breach between it and Ruskin College might now be closed."

We make no further comment than to repeat what we have urged above, *viz.*, that it is **VITAL** that everyone who has at heart the principles on which the C.L.C. was founded should *get together*, in order carefully to watch developments.—
 Ed. PLEBS.

THE EVOLUTION OF ECONOMIC THEORIES

(Translated for THE PLEBS by W. H. Mainwaring, from the German of G. Plekhanov)
(Concluded)

WHAT purpose would be served (asked Fourier) by studying a science and philosophy that reduced everything to past errors, and upon these placed the whole responsibility for existing poverty and suffering? Would it not be far better, since his schemes were prepared, to forget the past altogether? But he found the influence of capitalism and the theories of the so-called "national" economists too strong, and he was compelled to meet them in conflict. This took the form of a criticism of the existing order, and he hoped so to expose its inherent weaknesses and contradictions that the unreliability of the economists who defended it would also be plain.

They (the economists) dispute amongst themselves about the laws of social progress, laws that eventually of necessity must be replaced by others. . . . Why should we seek to understand the law of wages since wages as an economic category will not exist in the future society? Of just as little interest is it to understand the laws of exchange, money, and theories concerning credit, national debt and taxation. Some of these will disappear altogether whilst others will have changed their form.

This summarises the Utopians' attitude towards political economy as such, and gives sufficient reason for their failure to complete the partly-formulated theories of the Classical school. It can truly be said, indeed, that political economy made very little progress from the days of Ricardo and Sismondi to the time when Marx appears upon the scene. . . . The Utopians' superficial handling of economic theories did not, however, prevent them criticising capitalist administration. It is not necessary to be well-grounded in theory in order to be able to criticise a system which affords such abundant examples of waste and negligence.

Fourier was untiring in this work, and to his credit it must be said that by so doing he provided rich material for the theoretical investigators who followed him. He showed—e.g., that "civilisation" is far from utilising all the powers of production at its disposal, and he further declared that, properly organised, the fullest needs of the community could be satisfied by the use even of the wasteful methods then in operation. Poverty, which they vainly sought to remove, was created by themselves and perpetuated through the surplus produced by long arduous toil. . . . Poverty under civilisation had its source in abundance. . . .

But it was in the most important province of socialist thought that the Utopians were least informed. It has already been stated that they had failed to grasp either the historical origin or the historic rôle of capitalism. They held fast to the metaphysical conception of social development; or, more correctly, they had not yet sought to explain the social system from the standpoint of evolution. Economic history remained an unexplored province. To deal with this required much closer knowledge of science and philosophy than they possessed.

The German idealist philosophers of this period knew little if anything of political economy, but they had formulated a method which, freed from its idealistic setting, eventually proved of great service to economic science. Hegelian philosophy in particular viewed all phenomena as a process of change, which included both their appearance and disappearance. . . . Hegel had shown that idea and phenomenon can be understood only in their movement, in their long, gradual change. True, he did not explain the origin of the idea, but he did formulate a law which has become famous, viz., that *quantitative* differences imply *qualitative* changes. The *process* of change effects gradually a complete change of *form* in ideas and phenomena. Qualitative changes are thereby inconceivable without progress, a transition from one form to another—of which many of our modern "evolutionists" are so much afraid. To them every such transition appears unscientific, but as such developments are constantly seen both in society and nature, it is their own negative science which is manifested as unscientific and superficial. . . . Their fear of a revolution

drives these "scientists" to cover up the nature of social phenomena in every possible way. The class struggle, however, is the result and reflex of class interests and antagonism, an antagonism intensified by the actions of these very men.

Over and above all goes on the dialectic movement of phenomena and ideas, with their eternally-necessitated contradictions. This is the force which engenders every revolution in nature and history. Contradictions point the way to progress, and he who has a clear conception of what progress means need have no fear of class antagonism or the class struggle.

It is scarcely to be wondered at that the Utopians failed to grasp this point of view. To them the whole struggle was one between truth and error; truth being an abstract product of the mind, independent of time and space. To-day we know that truth is no such abstraction. Truth is concrete and what is true at one time may be false at another. Hegel had already pointed out that every philosophy was a product of its own time. This view is now applied to history, with the result that social and political ideas are seen to be simply the theoretical expression either of society as a whole or of a class or section of society at a given time.

The conflict of truth and error is thus simply the theoretical expression of the development of social conditions, with its consequent class struggles. The old metaphysical conception, shared alike by the 18th century materialists, the Utopian socialists and their bourgeois opponents, is done away with, and the new revolutionary philosophy takes its place.

Karl Marx extended the use of the dialectic method to social phenomena and thereby reconciled socialism and philosophy. As Engels said, modern socialism stands not only upon St. Simon, Fourier and Robert Owen, but upon Kant and Hegel. For this reason the statement that Marx applied the dialectic method to social phenomena needs qualification, because to Marx, as a materialist, that method had a different meaning than to Hegel, the idealist. Let Marx himself speak:—

My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its exact opposite. To Hegel, the life process of the human brain—*i.e.*, the process of thinking, which, under the name of "the idea," he even transforms into an independent subject—is the real *demiurgos* of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of "the idea." With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought. . . .

In its mystified form dialectic became the fashion in Germany, because it seemed to transform and to glorify the existing state of things. In its rational form it is a scandal and abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire professors, because it includes in its comprehension an affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, and at the same time also a recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up; because it regards every historically-developed social form as in fluid movement, and, therefore, takes into account its transient nature no less than its momentary existence; because it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary.

Hegel had already explained systems of philosophy as the theoretical expressions of given epochs. Marx now gave the dialectic a distinct form, and formulated the materialist conception of history. Social relations are developed by the influence of material conditions. In order to live man must take account of these conditions, by means of which alone can his wants be satisfied. Through the application of his own labour he transforms the materials he finds before him for his own use. And just as he must lead a social existence so must his productive labour take on a social character. "In order to produce, men must enter into definite connection and relation to one another." The relations of men to one another inside the productive process in no way depend upon their will and consciousness, but are conditioned by the existing method of production. As the character of the means of production changes, as nature becomes more and more subject to man, so the relations in which producers stand to one another change also. "With the discovery of a new instrument of warfare, the whole internal organisation of an army is necessarily altered, the relations of the

individuals composing it are transformed, and the relations of different armies to one another are likewise changed. . . . A society at a definite stage of historic development, a society with a peculiar distinctive character—ancient society, feudal society, bourgeois (or capitalist) society—is a totality of relations of production—each of which denotes a particular stage of development in the history of mankind.”

The productive relations of society as a whole form “the economic structure of society, upon which juridical and political superstructures are built and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.”

The mode of production determines the character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men which determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence which determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relation of production, or—what is but a legal expression of the same thing—with the property relations within which they had been at work.

From means of development these relations turn into fetters. Then comes the period of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformation the distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic condition of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, æsthetic or philosophic, in short ideological, forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so we cannot judge of a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must rather be explained from the contradiction of material life, from the existing conflict between the social forces of production and the relation of production. No social order ever disappears before all the productive forces, for which there is room in it, have been developed, and new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society. Therefore, mankind takes up only such problems as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely, we always find that the problem arises only when the material conditions necessary for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation.”

That is the Marxian philosophy of history. Does it correspond with the actual course of social development or not? Is Marx right—or are they right who charge him with having reduced everything to the level of crude mechanical materialism?

The modern socialist point of view is, therefore, quite distinct from that of the Utopians'. To them the consciousness of men determined social conditions, and this necessitated their working out in detail an alluring plan for the reconstruction of society. Men were to perceive the advantages offered by such a system and to cooperate in its establishment. But now that we understand that the “idea” is only the reflex of the material world in the human mind, little importance can be attached to this point of view. . . . The extent to which we can influence the progress of economic development is directly proportional to the degree of our understanding of the existing conditions and the changes necessitated therein. Our programme must, therefore, be based upon that philosophy which in its theoretical tenets as well as its practical proposals expresses the *necessary* passing away of the present phase in economic social evolution.

The labour movement must become the midwife of the new society, the embryo of which existing capitalist society carries in its womb. In this character we have to study the mechanism of birth and find out how best it can be accomplished. To the Utopians a possible defect in their scheme might bring everything to the ground. To the Marxian, the details of the new society are of no great interest, since they will be determined by conditions not yet foreseen. Since social conditions determine consciousness, no faulty conception can possibly prevent economic development. on the contrary, as this process goes on, the minds of men will always be able to

grasp the practical needs of life, and their consciousness must grow side by side with this development.

The supersession of the present order is largely dependent upon our understanding of its historical rôle. . . . Dissatisfied with the Utopians, Marx began a serious study of capitalist economy. By a critical use of the dialectical method, he exposed the superficial conceptions of the bourgeois economists, filled in the gaps and corrected the theories of the Classical school, and gave to economic science a new basis.

The theoretical progress of socialism is at the same time the theoretical progress of this science. Political economy has been changed into a science of the economic development of society. It now seeks to inquire into the laws and history of capitalist production and to show that the inevitable effect of these laws is to undermine the existing order and create the material conditions for a new society. In other words, while capitalist economy viewed the existing order as permanent and unchangeable, the economic science of to-day sees it as being in a process of development involving "both its appearance and its disappearance."

KINSHIP BELIEFS & CUSTOMS IN LANCASHIRE

THE study of folk-lore and of primitive customs, whose survivals have come down to us either in written word or oral tradition, presents a wide and valuable field of inquiry to the patient investigator intent on reconstructing the life of the common people of these islands. What the chronicles of property civilisation, whether local records or national documents, have purposely or in ignorance overlooked may be checked by a careful examination of comparative legends and popular customs.

South Lancashire, although to-day at the very centre of the classic region of capitalist production and circulation, was, prior to the introduction of machinery and the construction of canals and railways, an almost trackless wilderness beyond the bounds of agrarian or commercial activity. It was a march-land on the perimeter of civilised existence. The main stream of traffic went north and south up the eastern slope and plain beyond the Pennines. Lancashire faced an empty sea, devoid of commerce and far from the trade routes of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. There are only two cities in Lancashire and both are comparatively modern. Manchester had no parliamentary representation prior to 1832, and, at the time of the Municipal Corporations Act of 1834, was governed as a manorial village. Liverpool had no dock, and no trade to warrant one, before 1709. For another 30 years cotton came to East Lancashire by carrier's cart from London. Amongst the earlier place-names of the district there is only one, Padgate, on a probable well-beaten track across the waste of Chat Moss, that conveys the idea of going and coming, of intercourse and trade. Hence, we are not surprised to discover that witchcraft, goblins, boggarts, and curious apparitions received frank recognition and respect until comparatively recently, or that holidays, "wakes" and May Day festivals died hard in the Mersey Ribble valleys.

Now what can we learn from these survivals and the attitudes of mind which they disclosed? Have they anything to tell us concerning the environment and the economic and political debasement of our class?

Let us take, first of all, the "boggarts" which poor weavers saw on Saturday nights when returning full of ale and light of pocket to their homes in the hills or across the moss. The "boggarts" and "feeorin" were seen to flit across the sedgy wastes, to appear at wall-tops or gate-ways in the darkling night. The former word derives from "bar-gheist" or gate-ghost. The latter were equivalent to fairies, and both were akin to Puck or Hob and the "wee men." They haunted Harpurhey and Blackley, whilst on Droylesden Moor, betwixt Manchester and Ashton-under-Lyne, they were varied with "great big dhogs, wi' great glarin' een, as big as tay cups." These were the degenerate descendants of the were-wolves, or man-wolves, into which wicked men could transform themselves. Once on a time, ages before, the heroes and the gods of the North had taken these shapes to avenge themselves on their

foes or to escape from battle, or had assumed the totem-guise of their common ancestor.

In the Forest of Pendle and at Leigh, in the 17th and 18th centuries, witches were fully credited. They kept wild orgies on Rivington Pike or Pendle Hill, riding out and home on a broom-stick. Near Todmorden, on All Hallows Eve, the Spectral Huntsman hunted a milk-white doe; whilst, on dark, windy nights his hounds, the "Gabriel ratchets," went baying for the dead across the sky. At Burnley, the "hound of death," the "Skriker," with eyes "as large as saucers," used to appear, and it was there, too, that pigs had in a single night removed the parish church from one site to another. Goblin builders had taken the stones of Rochdale parish church from the banks of the Roach, and had deposited them on a more suitable spot, whilst "Old Scrat" long continued to take a lift on carts homeward bound, terrorising the drivers.

The Spectral Huntsman was All Father Odin, the one-eyed giant who rode the White Horse, to see which was death. The witches, now become hags, had been stalwart, clear-eyed, ruddy-skinned valkyries, corpse-choosers, swan-maidens, riding the clouds with All Father. "Gabriel's ratchets" were wild swans who went unseen in search of the dead or the dying, like the white wolves who howled a generation ago in the forests of Sweden. The pigs—unclean beasts—were, probably, the Christian's degradations of the golden boar, sacred to All Father, who was slain and eaten each night in Valhalla and was made whole each morning for the next repast.

These gods, valkyries, hounds and boar were parts of the pantheon of the divine beings who guarded the customs and clan-life of the kin before the trusteeship of the chieftain was completely transformed into absolute right, sanctioned in the interests of morality and civilisation by the priests Rome lent as guardians of authority to the kings and nobles who, as J. R. Green makes clear, were the actual patrons and enthusiasts of Christianity in England. These clerics denounced all inclination to continue the religious ceremonial arising out of the clan customs, and all deference to the old gods and the old ways, as "Black Magic," as a danger to mankind. They degraded Brunhild to be a crone. They made the swan-maidens into witches and "hounds of hell." They transformed "Skratr" into "Old Scrat" who claimed lazy serfs as his own. They deposed "Hold Nikor," the Northmen's guardian deity of the sea, from his god-head to the contemptuous status of "Old Nick," the cursed one; and, not succeeding in banishing him from memory, blessed him with holy water and christened him St. Nicholas. Reformed in name and character, he again became, at Liverpool, the patron of seafarers and in his church the pious privateers and slave traders of that prosperous port prayed for further favours. The boar of Odin, splendid with its golden bristles, was made out to be a mere filthy pig whose sacrilegious snout routed up the foundations of a Christian edifice.

The mere continuance of these superstitions, in however debased a form, points plainly enough to the reluctance with which the dispossessed kinsmen abandoned the ceremonial sanctions of their blood relations and the social order erected thereon. What we know of the prevalence of witch-hunting in the Middle Ages, and again in the century following upon the first great appropriation of the common lands, suggests to us that, despairing of any return to the good old days whether by open revolt or a change of fortune, the peasantry tried black magic, and by secret signs and ancient ritual sought to conjure up means to injure their oppressors. Just as the Friendly Society of Iron Founders met by night in fields outside Bolton during the stringent enforcement of the Combination Laws, so may the helpless serfs have met in conclave in clough and on moor. What so likely either as that the feudal lords, both secular and spiritual, should denounce their assemblies as sinful communion with fiends?

So much for the super-natural elements above named. There were other Lancashire beliefs expressing themselves in custom that call for our attention. One of these has left its traces even to the present day in the rush-bearings at Rochdale, the crowning of the May Queen at Knutsford, the remnants of morris dancing, and a few solitary painted poles, as at Failsworth, as well as the well-dressings at Buxton not so far away. This was the erection of the Tree of Life, the symbol of the ever-new

fertility of the village community, of the family group, which was practised by men and maidens in the springtide. The rite was pagan in its origin and no swinging censor or priestly benediction could make either flower-strewn fountains or flower-garlanded tree-trunks other than the emblems of kinship and of common life.

The holidays were, for the main part, adopted festivals of old-time gods and goddesses. In the same way, the monoliths—with or without cross-bars—in Lancashire, Cheshire and Peakland churchyards may have been erected by Paulinus and his band of missionaries, but they were not the first upright and graven stones to stand erect on those mounds or to fit into those stone sockets. Nor did the folk-moot learn first to come together at the tolling of the church bell. It came to the mound and the monolith at Winwick or at Whalley long before the church was built near to that familiar spot.

The "Wakes" and "Fairings" were not always days given over to jaunts to Blackpool. They were the occasion of meetings of the people of the countryside for inter-change of goods, for intercourse and festival. They derived from pilgrimages to sacred wells or dedicated shrines once full of significance to inter-related families who thus commemorated by games—as among the North American Indians and the Greeks—by plays, and by "churchings" their essential unity of life.

Too many holidays were not regarded with favour by the "output" enthusiasts of private property civilisation. The sap of life in human veins was less hallowed in their eyes than glittering coin in rapid circulation. Before the "spirit of improvement" that robbed us of our wastes and greens—of which Lancashire had so many till Stanleys and other county gentry found better use for them—the sports and holidays had to make way. They robbed us of our lands and our leisure, reclaimed the meres and cleared the mosses, and gave us Platt Bridge and Widnes instead. They tore down the may-poles and gave us the commercialised football and racing paraphernalia of the horse-owning Hultons. They ridded our minds of boggarts, and taught us to read and believe in Bottomley. Great, indeed, is Progress under private enterprise and private property.

J. T. WALTON NEWBOLD.

A SOCIALIST ACADEMY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

(Continued)

27 Students who have to their credit the minimum number of attendances and terms, and who show sufficient proficiency in their knowledge, receive a diploma certifying that they have attended a full course in the complete or in any special set of sciences.

28 Lecturers and assistants are elected, for the term of one year, by the respective sections from among such persons as have proved their competence in scientific work or teaching, and are recommended by the professors and other teachers of those sections. They may be re-elected at the end of the year for another term of one year.

29 Professors are elected by the respective sections for a period of five years, by competition to which all are admitted who have proved their fitness by their labours in the field of social sciences or by their activity as lecturers in the same field. At the end of five years they may be re-elected for another term.

30 The teaching work of the Division, sections, and other organisations is controlled by their respective councils which consist of representatives of the following three categories: (1) students who have attended at least two half-yearly terms; (2) lecturers and assistants; and (3) professors.

THE GENERAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE S.A.S.S.

31 The general administration of the affairs and the work of the S.A.S.S. lies in the hands of an Academic Council.

32 The Academic Council consists of (1) Two Fellows from each section of the Academic Division; (2) One professor, lecturer or assistant from each section of the Educational Division; (3) Four members appointed by the All-Russian C.E.C.;

(4) Two Associate Members; and (5) Two students who have attended at least two half-yearly terms.

33 The Academic Council elects from its midst five members and two deputies for a period of one year, to form a Presidential Bureau. The deputies replace those members who have vacated their office, in the order of their election.

34 The members of the Bureau distribute among themselves the duties of (1) transacting the affairs of the S.A.S.S.; (2) presiding over the Finance Committee (3) presiding over the Students' Affairs Committee.

35 The Bureau of the Academy opens and closes the sittings of the Academic Council, appoints and dismisses all the administrative employees on the recommendation of the persons in charge of the respective institutions, makes general rules in respect of discipline and studies, submits to the Academic Council suggestions for the admission to each group and section of each Division, conducts the relations of the S.A.S.S. with other bodies and institutions, and draws up, in conjunction with the Finance Committee, the annual estimates of revenue and expenditure.

36 Three members make a quorum of the Bureau.

37 A secretary is, by invitation of the Bureau, attached to it for carrying on the business of the S.A.S.S.

38 The competence of the Academic Council extends, in addition to the subjects mentioned above, to the following:—(a) the drawing up of schemes of general work and research to be taken up by the Academy; (b) organisation of congresses and meetings in connection with the S.A.S.S.; (c) election of the Presidential Bureau and of the annual auditors, and the examination of their reports; (d) the selection of subjects for public competition and the issue of prizes for scientific works on subjects studied and taught at the S.A.S.S.; (e) compilation of the annual report on the scientific and practical work of the S.A.S.S. and its branches; (f) decisions to open branches of the S.A.S.S. in Russia and abroad; (g) examination of all questions of scientific and practical importance, submitted to the Academic Council by the All-Russian C.E.C., the Presidential Bureau, the Finance Committee, the Publication Bureau, the councils of the Divisions and sections, the Students' Affairs Committee as well as individual members of the Academic Council; (h) decisions on questions of acquisition, for use, of lands and buildings and the assumption of liabilities of all kinds by the S.A.S.S.; (i) approval of general estimates of revenue and expenditure of the S.A.S.S. on the recommendations of the Presidential Bureau and the Finance Committee; (j) proposals fixing and altering the staff (and its salaries) for teaching and practical instruction, the maintenance-salaries of the Fellows, the scholarship of the Associate Members and students, and of all the employees of the S.A.S.S. and its institutions; (k) disbursement of the assigned sums for academic, scientific and teaching work; (l) issue of instructions directing the labours of the Presidential Bureau, the Finance, and the Students' Affairs Committees of the Publication Bureau and other institutions of the S.A.S.S.; (m) conduct of all relations on behalf of the S.A.S.S.; (n) election of the editorial committee for the publications of the S.A.S.S.; (o) examination and amendment of the present Rules and Regulations; (p) fixing the number of Associated Members and students; (q) delegation, on behalf of the S.A.S.S., of its members to attend learned congresses and meetings, (r) fixing the number of Fellows above the figure of the schedule, and so on.

39 The Academic Council has the right to appoint special commissions and permanent or temporary committees to examine and to report upon questions of organisation and practical administration and to confer upon them special powers and to give them special instructions.

40 The Academic Council is convened, and its session is opened by the Presidential Bureau, its sessions to be as frequent as may be required, but not rarer than three times per half-yearly term.

41 At each session of the Academic Council one member is elected by it to preside over the proceedings.

42 One-third of the total number of members of the Academic Council constitutes a quorum.

Note.—At least one-half of the total number of members of the Academic Council must be present in order that decisions taken on questions referred to in clause (o), Art. 38, may be valid.

MANAGEMENT OF THE EDUCATIONAL DIVISION

43 The Council of the Educational Division consists of representatives, elected in equal numbers by (1) the professors; (2) lecturers and assistants; and (3) students of the Division.

44 The election of the members of the council takes place at a general meeting of the members of the S.A.S.S. of the above three categories separately.

Note.—The elections are valid when made in the presence of not less than one half of the total number of members of the respective categories.

45 The Council elects from its midst a dean and secretary of the Division.

46 The Dean of the Division supervises the execution of the decisions of the Council, convenes and presides over its meetings, acts outside in its name, and informs the Division of the decisions of the Academic Council and of the councils of the Academic Division and other institutions of the S.A.S.S., while the secretary transacts the business of the Division and supplies the students with information.

47 In addition to the subjects enumerated in other articles of the present Rules and Regulations, the Council of the Division (a) exercises general control over the teaching and studies of the Division, (b) appoints representatives on the Finance Committee, (c) submits, on proposals from the sections, estimates of revenue and expenditure of the Division to the Finance Committee and the Presidential Bureau, (d) publishes, on information received from the sections, the annual plan of tuition and programme of lectures, examinations and practical studies, (e) receives reports on the results of the competitions arranged by the sections for filling the professorial and teaching vacancies, and confirms the results of the elections to these posts, (f) takes decisions in respect of printing and translation of reference and text-books, (g) effects, at least once in three years, a redistribution of subjects and chairs among the sections, (h) confirms the rules drafted by the sections governing the admission of students to the sections, (i) announces special and incidental courses of studies outside the general programme of studies, (j) establishes auxiliary educational institutions in connection with the Division, (k) draws up the annual report on the information supplied by the sections and auxiliary institutions and presents it to the Academic Council, (l) supervises the libraries of the Division and sections and adds to their contents.

48 The decisions of the Council are valid if adopted in the presence of not less than one-half of the total number of its members.

49 The composition of the councils of the sections, the mode of election of representatives on them, the rights and duties of the deans and secretaries, the methods of transacting business and convening the councils within the limits of their competency, are regulated in accordance with the sense of articles 30, 43, 44, 45 and 46 of the present Rules and Regulations.

50 In addition to the subjects mentioned in other articles of the present Rules and Regulations, the councils of the sections (a) fill vacant posts of professors, lecturers and assistants; (b) announce public prize competitions; (c) issue, whenever necessary, special rules for admission to the sections; (d) make their suggestions to the council of the Division with regard to the redistribution of subjects among the sections; (e) take decisions as to printing text-books, etc., required by them; (f) receive and confirm the annual reports on the work of their sections and educational institutions belonging to them; (g) make rules for their respective sections on the subject of terms, their duration, sequence, mode of counting, etc.; (h) submit to the council of the Division an annual report of the work of their sections; (i) submit to the council of the Division proposals with regard to the grants to be made to their sections and the institutions belonging to it, to meet their budgetary requirements.

51 The decisions of a section are valid if adopted in the presence of not less than one-half of its total number of members.

(To be continued.)

THE PLEBS MEET*

THE LEAGUE: PRESENT POSITION and FUTURE DEVELOPMENT—BASIS of ORGANISATION— THE MAGAZINE and its PROSPECTS.

THE Annual Meet of the Plebs League—postponed from August last—was held at the Labour College on Saturday, Nov. 8th. There was a very full Agenda, including some particularly important items (the re-drafting of the constitution of the League in view of present needs and circumstances being the most urgent), and representatives from several provincial branches, as well as students in residence at the College and a good muster of London Plebs, got through the business—and came to some fairly definite conclusions—with a keenness which had nothing of “ca’ canny” about it. It remains for the Executive Committee, and *Plebeians throughout the country*, to carry those conclusions into actual practice, and to see to it that 1919–20 marks a turning point in the fortunes both of the League and of the Magazine.

Very little rhetoric was indulged in at the Meet, and what little there was must be omitted from this report. B. S. Mackay occupied the chair, and briefly welcomed old friends back from firing-lines or gaols. He pointed out the importance of the questions to be discussed, and obtained the assent of the meeting to a fixed timetable, with a hard-and-fast time limit for speakers.

SECRETARY'S REPORT.

Winifred Horrabin presented the Secretary's Report and the Balance-Sheet (which latter has already appeared in the Magazine). She divided her Report under three heads—the Magazine, the Publications Department, and the League. As regards the first, it had been a year of “ups and downs.” The reduction of the Magazine to 16 pages (September, 1918 to August, 1919) necessitated by the high cost of paper, resulted—not altogether unexpectedly—in a decrease of circulation. During the past two months an upward movement had supervened, but we were *not yet paying our way*. Donations to a Special Appeal Fund had made up the deficit, but this was an unsatisfactory state of affairs. The only sound and lasting remedy was an increase of circulation, and *it could not come too soon*. At present, the Magazine cost us a fraction of a penny more than we received for it (*i.e.*, in the case of the parcel orders for quantities, which account for fully three-quarters of the whole circulation). Every unsold copy sent out is accordingly a dead loss; and the copies sold do not pay the bill we have to meet monthly. A thousand new subscribers would reduce the net cost per copy to a fraction *under* selling price. Two thousand would put the Magazine on a sound footing. But if we could *double* our circulation (as we did in 1915–16, and could do again if every member put his back into it) we should not only be able to dispense with Special Appeals, but should have a margin to use in additional propaganda, issue of leaflets, syllabuses, text-books, etc., etc. “Our concern,” Mrs. Horrabin concluded, “is, first and foremost, *propaganda*. If anyone can suggest a better instrument of propaganda than the Magazine, then let us give up the Magazine and concentrate on the new weapon. If not, let us devote all our energies to putting, and keeping, the Magazine on a satisfactory basis, once and for all.”

As regards the Publications Department, she reported highly satisfactory sales of Ablett's *Easy Outlines of Economics*, 10,000 of which were printed earlier this year; and a gratifying response to the appeal for advance orders of Craik's *Short History* and Starr's *A Worker Looks at History*, 10,000 of each of which were now in the press. A quick sale for these two books would put us on our feet so far as the Publications Department was concerned, and would enable us to realise various long-dreamt-of (and much-needed) schemes.

The League membership had increased very considerably during the year, and many new branches had been formed. Organisation and co-ordination were now

* Best thanks are due to F. Phippen and J. Jones, students at the College, for taking shorthand notes on which this report is based.—Ed. *Plebs*.

needed. The Agenda had been drawn up with a view to the initial steps in that direction.

She appealed, in conclusion, not so much for financial assistance, welcome though that always was, as for just a little more *whole-hearted* support from friends and members. Our movement was big enough, and vital enough, to demand all the time and energy we could devote to it, and she, for one, was proud to be able to take an active part in it. It ought not, and must not, be a mere "side line." What we needed was a band of workers, who, leaving the practical work of the industrial and political sides of the Labour movement to others, would concentrate on the aims and propaganda of the Plebs League. Whatever *form of organisation* resulted from their discussion that afternoon, she urged members to realise that such forms are mere scraps of paper unless backed by *individual effort, enthusiasm and readiness* for increasing work.

The Report and Balance-Sheet were adopted unanimously. Messrs. J. P. Millar and G. Melhuish were elected as Auditors for the coming year.

THE "ORGANISING FUND."

Heber Pratt presented his report on the "Organising Fund," instituted to pay the Secretary a weekly salary during the Editor's absence (March, 1918—February, 1919). Upwards of £70 was subscribed, and he tendered his hearty thanks to all those who had helped.

A vote of thanks to Comrade Pratt for his work in connection with this special Fund was carried unanimously.

THE OBJECT OF THE PLEBS LEAGUE.

Having surveyed the past, the meeting turned to the future, and settled down to the consideration of the items on the Agenda dealing with the Constitution of the League and its re-organisation.

C. Terry first moved, for the Executive, that

We re-affirm the paragraph headed "Object," omitting the word "ultimately." (from the final phrase "and ultimately to assist in the abolition of wage-slavery.") There was a greater need than ever, said Terry, for clear *class-conscious* thinking. The PLEBS stood for a particular kind, a partisan kind, of education. We were out for the dictatorship of the proletariat in education. And we had only to re-affirm, not in any way to modify, the Object of the Plebs League during the 10 years of its existence. The small verbal change indicated in the resolution was put forward partly for grammatical reasons; but still more, he thought, because the word "ultimately" had a far-away sound about it, and we were out for business NOW.

Eden Paul, seconding, agreed that "ultimately" sounded rather too remote, particularly in view of the rate at which events were moving everywhere to-day.

Resolution carried unanimously.

METHODS, MEMBERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT.

Mark Starr then moved, on behalf of the Executive, a resolution dealing with the paragraphs of the Constitution headed as above. Under "Methods," the first clause to read—

(i) *To assist in the formation of classes in Social Science; such classes to be maintained and controlled, wherever possible, by Trade Unions, Trades Councils, or other working-class organisations.*

Clauses (ii) and (iii), referring to the publication of the Magazine, and the League's support for the Labour College and other working-class educational institutions with the same aims, to remain unaltered.

Under "Membership and Management," the following to be substituted for present clauses:—

(i) *Each member shall pay 1s. a year to the Central Fund of the League.*

(ii) *Wherever possible, individual members shall form branches, to which local organisations can affiliate. Every such branch to be responsible for its own expenses, and to have a voting strength at the Meet according to its membership.*

(iii) *Any alteration in the constitution shall be decided upon by postal ballot of all members of the League.*

(iv) *Seven Executive Committee members, the Secretary and the Editor of the Magazine, shall be elected by postal ballot.*

In a few happily-phrased sentences Starr congratulated the "old guard"—the men who had agitated, agitated, agitated, since 1908—on the visible success of their efforts that day, when the College, furnished and equipped as never before, and with a "full house" of staff and students, was controlled and maintained by two great Trade Unions. In the country there were more social science students than ever before. The PLEBS certainly was not a spent force. But this very fact of the altered circumstances as regards the College made the re-organisation of the work and methods of the Plebs League essential. We were once more a *propaganda* body, specialising in working-class education, and the Executive Committee had had to hammer out a scheme which would enable us to develop and extend our work. Organisation by districts being yet impracticable, in view of already existing and widely varying systems in different localities, it was decided that *individual membership* be the basis of the League—*i.e.*, an individual annual subscription (1s.) and an individual vote.

So far as the League as a whole was concerned, therefore, it would consist of individual members all over the country. But to ensure the best results in every locality, members were urged to form *branches*. Those branches would have full autonomy, subject only to the "Object" and "Methods" of the League. Their work would be (1) to get classes formed, to run them where necessary, and to watch over them when taken over by the local Trade Union organisations; (2) to organise the circulation and distribution of the Magazine; and (3) to undertake propaganda on behalf of Independent Working-Class Education by any and every possible means.

On all important questions concerning the League as a whole—*e.g.*, alteration of Constitution, election of officers, etc.—a vote of all members would be taken by postal ballot. This made the Meet a consultative, and not a legislative, body; and this resolution which he was now moving would, if the Meet approved it, be submitted to postal ballot of all members in this way. The voting strength of a branch, therefore, at the Meet or at any other conferences called, would be the total strength of the League members forming it.

He would like to refer at this point to a resolution received by the Executive from the Liverpool District Committee for Independent Working-Class Education:—"That representation be allowed at Plebs Meets from all Social Science classes, and organisations running classes in connection with the Plebs and the Labour College." That resolution, it would be noticed, assumed that the *class*, and not the *branch* or individual member, was the unit of organisation of the League; an impracticable basis for the League,* since only one or two class-members might be members of the *propagandist* organisation—the League. The question at issue was, simply, the best means of organising the work of the League, now that the College was once more open and was asking for classes to affiliate to it. What was our job now? It was surely sufficiently clear—to get classes started; and then the College would look after them and assist them, so far as teachers and curriculum were concerned, in every possible way. What form of organisation was best suited, then, to the work we had to perform? He urged that the scheme he had outlined was in every respect the most satisfactory and practicable; and, further, that it should be discussed as a whole, and not in sections, since every clause in it followed and was dependent upon the others.

Before the resolution was discussed, the chairman put the question of the Liverpool resolution to the meeting (there being no Liverpool representative present), and it was decided to take it as an amendment. It was accordingly moved and seconded.

Geo. Sims, in strongly supporting Starr's resolution, emphasised the need

* It was discussed very fully in the correspondence columns of the Magazine during the early part of this year, and the distinction between *class* and *branch* made clear by Frank Jackson and others.—Ed. *Plebs*.

for the League to set its house in order. It was the pioneer propagandist of Independent Working-class Education. Its name was now well-known, and what it stood for generally recognised. The obvious way of co-ordinating the work now being done all over the country *on the lines the Plebs had been the first to advocate*, was for everyone interested to get together in a single organisation, with simply and clearly-defined objects. The Plebs League was such an organisation. The scheme which had been outlined offered ample opportunity for everybody to come in. The subscription was—in these days particularly—almost negligible. The constitution gave to every member full opportunity to exercise his share of control of the League as a whole. There appeared to be a tendency, now that the importance of the aims of the Plebs was being more and more widely recognised, to ignore or neglect the pioneer organisation—although its name was still used, and its help solicited if required. Hundreds, nay thousands, of worker-students up and down the country knew of the PLEBS, sympathised with its objects, yet remained outside the League. They must make a big effort to get together, in one organisation, everyone whose aims were the same. The Executive's resolution covered the necessary first steps.

W. W. Craik, speaking from the point of view of the College, said that the relation of the League and the classes must take the same form locally as it did centrally. Just as the League must watch jealously over the College, and see to it that its educational aims and policy were not only adhered to, but extended and developed, so the branches must watch the local classes, standing for a *real* working-class point of view against all the various influences making for modification and "dilution." It was education on these lines, education on fundamentals, which was going to eliminate sectionalism in the industrial and political movements. The Board of the College had taken steps to define, by means of a definite machinery of affiliations, its relation to local classes, and he thought there was no doubt as to the value of the assistance which the College would be able to afford to the classes. Classes would be circularised as to the conditions under which that assistance could be given, and all agreeing to these conditions would be entitled to style themselves Labour College Classes. The College, then, was preparing to take over and develop the tutorial side of the work, once classes were formed. The Plebs League must be responsible for educational *propaganda*, both before and after classes were in existence. That was a very definite sphere of operations, and he supported the resolution since it promised to put the organisation of the League on the right basis for the work to be done.

J. F. Horrabin described the problem which the Executive Committee had had to solve. A very loosely-defined system of affiliations—in some cases of *branches*, in others of *classes*—had grown up during the period of the College's suspension, when the League had had to face the rapid extension of classes everywhere. That system had been adapted to varying local needs and conditions in varying ways, and the result—so far as the central organisation was concerned—was simply chaos. The situation had been simplified by the re-opening of the College, and by its invitation to classes to affiliate to itself. It remained to re-organise the work of the League on some *uniform* basis, and he urged that the resolution embodied the most satisfactory method of doing this. There were many important developments of their work waiting to be taken in hand—methods of co-ordination to be decided upon, the Magazine to be enlarged and its circulation extended, the Publications Department to be worked up—but the obvious "next step" was to adopt a simple constitution and form of organisation adapted to their function as a propagandist organisation.

Dr. Dessin (Bradford) also spoke in support, and J. P. M. Millar asked whether the Plebs League intended in all cases to urge classes to affiliate to the London Labour College. The Scottish College was already in existence, and other Colleges were in process of formation. He thought the League would be narrowing down its sphere of operations unnecessarily—and regrettably—if it identified itself exclusively with one single institution, even though it were the pioneer College.

Mark Starr, in reply, quoted the clause in the Constitution (unaltered by this

resolution) which pledged the League to support in every possible way "the work of the Labour College and other similar institutions," and pointed out that although the circumstances of its foundation and subsequent existence had given the Plebs a special interest in the London College, there was absolutely nothing, implied or stated, in its Constitution which bound it to support one institution as against others with the same aims. Rather, it sought to serve as a link between all such educational centres; and on this ground alone, as a means for the co-ordination of educational activity, he thought the existence—and further development—of the League was more than justified.

The Liverpool amendment was then put, and lost; and the Executive's resolution carried.

THE MAGAZINE.

J. F. Horrabin then made a brief statement about the Magazine, amplifying the figures and facts already given in the Secretary's report (see above). What the League had got to make up its mind to was a prompt getting to work to increase the circulation by 50 per cent. If the Magazine was worth while, it ought to pay its way. Did all class-students read it? If not, and he was pretty sure they did not (unless they clubbed together and shared a single copy between a group), why not? He appealed for criticisms and suggestions.

A big change was in contemplation—an enlargement of the Magazine to twice its present size, and an increase of the price to 6d. monthly. Practically all the expressions of opinion on this scheme which had come in were in favour of it. But such a step could not be taken without guarantees. A circulation of 6,000 per month was essential. The ideal time to make the change was at the beginning of a new volume—next January. But unless our subscribers, for single copies and parcels, sent along orders and guarantees before that time, we could not afford to take the risk. What did those present suggest? It was expecting too much of the Executive to leave them to take decisions of this sort without any backing from League members and supporters everywhere.

Eden Paul moved the adoption of the Editor's report, and urged that the Executive take all necessary steps to ascertain the general feeling as to an increase in the size and scope of the Magazine—which he strongly favoured. He wanted larger type and a greater variety of contents, and for both these reasons enlargement of size was essential. He was sure that the voluntary work now being done for the PLEBS—editorial, secretarial, contributions, etc.—was done gladly and willingly, and would continue to be so. But it was high time the League considered the employment either (1) of a paid organiser, or (2) of clerical assistance in the routine office work, leaving a "volunteer" free to do some organising.

In the course of a brief discussion on the Magazine, various points were raised.*

The question of a badge for the League was discussed, and though some indifference to the matter was expressed, the feeling of the Meeting was undoubtedly in favour of the matter being proceeded with.

A vote of thanks to the Governors for their permission to hold the Meeting at the College concluded the proceedings.

Telegrams conveying fraternal greetings to the Meeting were received from Tom Mann and W. Paul (Birmingham), and Walton Newbold and Robert Holder (Lancashire).

Still Selling.

Thirtieth Thousand.

WHAT DOES EDUCATION MEAN TO THE WORKER?

16 pp., 1½d. Postpaid, 2d. 1s. 3d. per doz. 9s. per 100.

☞ The Plebs position in a nutshell.

From PLEBS LEAGUE, 11A PENYWERN ROAD, EARLS COURT, S.W.5

* Dealt with on another page of this issue.

THE PLEBS LEAGUE BADGE

The Executive got to business at once on the question of the League badge. What they wanted was a design at once simple and striking—something fresher and less conventional than that published in the Magazine a month or two ago. The design they have decided upon is reproduced herewith. We can hear you murmur "But what on earth!" etc., etc. There you are! It's made you lift your eyebrows and ask a question—the very thing that a badge, if it's to be of practical *propaganda* value, should do. And it's appropriateness is self-evident. For the League, as an educational organisation, exists to ask WHY, to find out WHY, and to explain WHY—things are as they are! To the explanations offered by the orthodox we retort with a big Query—hence our badge. Its wearers will be marked down as people ready to answer questions—and, unless we're much mistaken, lots of questions will be asked. This badge "summarises" the League, and what the League is out for.



The design is already in the hands of the manufacturer. What we now want to know is how many we are to order. We suggest making them in two styles—stud (button) for men, and brooch (with pin) for women. We can't state price yet, because that depends on how many are ordered. But 1s. 6d. would be a maximum, even if only a few are required; and we should probably be able to do them for 10d. if the orders roll in. Let the Secretary know your requirements, therefore, *without delay*. We're not wealthy enough to place orders "on spec"—and we want to place a good order. It's a good design, and it will help you to arouse interest and get new members. Roll up!

PROPAGANDA

A four-page leaflet is in preparation, and will be ready shortly, outlining the aims of the Plebs' League, suggesting methods of propaganda for branches and individuals, stating, in brief, *why* you should be a Pleb, and *why* you should entice others into the fold. A membership form will be attached. Let us know how many of these you will undertake to "plant" in likely places. Name, address, and number required—to Secretary, Plebs' League. No charge—unless you like to send stamps to cover postage.

CORRESPONDENCE

ERGATOCRACY.

DEAR COMRADE,—I hope that Eden and Cedar Paul will accept my assurance that I had not the slightest intention of belittling the value of their work. Very much the contrary. All I desired to do was to protest against any tendency to academicism. I cited the *name* "ergatocracy" as a comparatively innocent example of what I was combating. I had no intention of belittling the importance of their study of the shop-stewards' movement, with the main conclusions of which I find myself in agreement.

Except on this question of *name* there is no dispute. But on this question I remain unrepentant. A correspondent suggested that as new scientific terms are usually coined from Greek roots, therefore we ought to follow precedent. Precisely because of this I desire to combat it. Rightly or wrongly, Greek has come to be the hall-mark of the "Don." It has been accepted as the badge of the tribe.

Why will not "Communism" fill the bill? Our philosophy, our aims and our methods—are they not Communist? And as for the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat," why not the "rule of the Workers" and have done with it?

But I will swallow much worse mouthfuls than "ergatocracy" rather than disparage the work of such good comrades as E. and C. P.—to whom greetings and salutations!

Yours fraternally, THOS. A. JACKSON.

A DISCLAIMER.

DEAR COMRADE,—I cannot accept the alternative J. F. H. offers me: to withdraw or substantiate a charge of "peculiarly detestable snobbishness." I refuse to withdraw, because I did not make such a charge; and I will not endeavour to substantiate

it for the same reason. I had no idea our comrade was so "touchy." And he such a hard hitter, too!

If the absence of "Bookshelf" from the November PLEBS is due to J. F. H. retiring to his tent to brood over the alleged charge, I hope that, after receiving this assurance, he will buckle on his armour and sally forth to the fray once more. So that's that!

But why, oh why, does he pass over Comrade Rayner? If a withdrawal is demanded from me, an action for libel should surely be instituted against him!

Yours fraternally P. LAVIN.

"STUDENTS' OUTLINES." By W. W. CRAIK.

DEAR COMRADE,—I should be glad if you will allow me to disclaim in the PLEBS all responsibility for the publication by the "Halifax Branch of the Central Labour College" of the book recently issued under the above title. The contents of this book represent outlines of lectures given by me during the past six years at the College, together with outlines on Political Economy which were specially written for the use of classes and which appeared in the PLEBS during 1915-16.

Those outlines were never intended, and are not adapted, for publication in their present form. I was unaware of the intentions of our Halifax friends until the book was already in the hands of the printer. I then asked that the proofs should be sent to me for revision, but my request was not met. Without wishing in any way to injure the enterprise or to discourage the enthusiasm of our comrades, I think that I am entitled to protest against what appears to me to be an unwarrantable disregard of the elementary rights of authorship Yours fraternally, W. W. CRAIK.

PLEBS NOTES AND NEWS: BY THE WAY

Congratulations to W. G. Cove on his election to Executive of the National Union of Teachers. May he be able to put some Marxian ginger into that somewhat conservative organisation!

T. A. Jackson, late of Leeds, whose contributions have been a lively feature of recent PLEBS, has been appointed lecturer and organiser to the North Eastern C. L. C. League.

We note an old friends' name among the list of *Daily Herald* organisers—J. Reynolds, for S. Wales. We can rely on J. R. wherever he goes, to recommend a certain monthly as well as the only Labour daily.

We are now booking orders for bound vols. of PLEBS, 1918 (Vol. 10) and 1919 (Vol. 11), price 5s., post paid. You might choose a worse Xmas present.

We look to our friends in Durham to support the motion on the Annual Conference agenda, to grant £50 towards the classes in that area. Also to do all in their power to get that new "Object" inserted when the alteration of Rules is under discussion, so that students can travel to the Labour College from Durham. Northumberland has shown them the way!

NOMAD: dictionary definition—"A person belonging to a race or tribe which moves from place to place to find pasture; hence one who lives a roaming or wandering life"—e.g., Arabs, tramps—and the PLEBS Secretary. But the latter has reformed, has settled down at 11A Penywern Road, and requests you to erase from your notebooks and your memories all earlier addresses (Oxford, Sheffield, Ravenscourt Park, etc., etc.). Your p.o.'s and your kind messages will come through with the minimum of delay if sent to the address now legibly printed on front cover of this magazine. Kindly forget all others.

Please note that orders for the new edition of Mr. and Mrs. Webb's *Trade Unionism* should be sent to the Secretary of the Labour College (not PLEBS), and that cash orders only (5s. 6d., post paid) can be booked.

For sweet simplification's sake, we are going to make our Magazine year, our financial year and the calendar year all coincide. That is to say, we start a new volume next month (January, 1920), the present volume consisting of 11 instead of 12 numbers, concluding with this issue. League subscriptions paid since September, and from now onwards, cover the whole of 1920. A.D. 1920, Vol. xii. of the PLEBS, and a Big PLEBS Push, all start on January 1st. Get busy!

REVIEWS

THE "NEW SCHOOL."

A New School in Belgium. By A. F. VASCANLLES. Translated by Eden and Cedar Paul. (Harrap, 5s.).

PLEBS interested in the subject of juvenile education will find much to think over in this account of one of five "new schools" (two in this country) run on "carefully-thought-out lines of self-government and control." The author's School, founded in 1912 at Bierges, was put an end to by the German invasion of Belgium. Various aspects of education—correlation of studies, co-education of the sexes, size of classes, contact between book-learning, handicraft and life—are all discussed in a way which reminds one of the educational ideals of Robert Owen.

To the overworked teacher in an ordinary day-school the description of such conditions will sound almost hopelessly Utopian. But the organised teachers, in co-operation with the newly-elected Labour Councillors, might utilise many of the book's suggestions in the not so very distant future. But before such ideal educational conditions could be universalised, a radical change in society will need to take place. Experiments like these, however, do afford evidence of what it may be possible to accomplish when education aims at developing men and women instead of wage-slaves.

M. S.

HUMANISM.

The Meaning of Socialism. By J. BRUCE GLASIER. (National Labour Press. 2s. 6d. and 3s. 6d.)

A little bird once whispered in my ear that the author of this book, uplifted by the spiritual tone of an I.L.P. Conference a year or two ago, observed in conversation—"Thank Heaven, the movement is going *forward!* The black cloud of Marxism is lifting at last." One was surprised to gather that, in Comrade Glasier's opinion or anybody else's, the "black cloud of Marxism" had ever been so threatening over the sheltered pastures of the British I.L.P. But whatever it was then, it is certainly a good deal blacker and more threatening to-day; and one suspects that this book is a last gallant attempt to force rose-coloured spectacles on the younger generation. Not that it is an "anti-Marxist" pamphlet. But it approaches Socialism, as J. A. Hobson writes in an Introduction, "through the door, not of economics or politics, but of art and morals," and people who enter this way "have done most to foster and spread this vital spirit, both of criticism and construction." This book, he goes on, "expresses more fully and, I think, more successfully than any other of our time, this *humanist* interpretation and outlook."

If you like "humanism" you will enjoy this book. If on the other hand you think it resembles cotton-wool in its general lack of form, hardness, or definiteness—well, you will keep half-a-crown in your pocket.

J. F. H.

ANOTHER EASY OUTLINE.

The Outline of History. By H. G. WELLS. Illustrated. (To be published in about 20 fortnightly parts. Geo. Newnes Ltd. 1s. 2d. per part.)

A compendium of universal history, by a writer who can write "readably," is a useful book for all working-class students. Mr. Wells *can* write, we know, vividly and sympathetically. There will assuredly be life in the "dry bones" when he has handled them. Let us admit at once that—unless he has changed a good deal recently—he will not write history from *our* point of view; but that is by no means to say that he will not do good work from our point of view. He must build on the facts; and if, as we claim, facts are the blood and bones of our historical theory, then, consciously or unconsciously, he cannot help helping us. He may, like Hegel, put the Idea first—and accordingly advocate "community of Ideas" as the prerequisite of a real internationalism. But, like Hegel too, he sees that it is the Idea in *movement and development* which counts. And whether he links the Idea with its economic groundwork, or leaves us to do that for him, he is bound to give us ample food for thought and study.

He at any rate sees that the day of purely *national* history is done—as Marxian historical students realised quite a long time ago; and that, as Arnold Bennett

phrased it the other day, "you simply cannot understand the history of China without keeping an eye on the sequence of events in Peru." That should be the chief value of this book to worker-students (with limited time and purses)—that it will give in digestible form the main facts of world-history otherwise only accessible in whole libraries of highly-priced books. We'll supply our own interpretation of the events if he'll tell us what the events were!

The Russian Revolution, following on world-war, has led us to a wider outlook. H. G. Wells—a sensitised plate to the movements of opinion—reflects this development. In his letter to Upton Sinclair a year ago he proclaimed his faith in Wilson as the new Messiah, which showed that his heart, if not his head, was in the right place; since it was the Idea his heart warmed to, and not the man. And Wells' own leading Idea, that national history must be viewed in its proper setting of world development, is sufficient to give his book a real value.

If he offers us battle on the interpretation of the facts of history, he will lose; since no man can resist Truth. The student of history to-day, if he has the courage to correlate, cannot help gathering additional support for the Materialist Conception of History. And, since H. G. Wells has an inquiring mind, courage, and imagination, it will be interesting to see how far along our lines he will travel.

Our friend J. F. H. has, in the course of earning his daily bread, done a number of illustrations to the book—maps, charts, etc.—which, if made use of, would add considerably to the effectiveness of our class-work; and when we reach the stage of lantern lectures his contributions should prove of great value in the forcible presentation of biological and social growth and development.

This work promises to be a really desirable addition to what must inevitably be a limited library. G. S.

Further Facts from the Coal Commission, noticed in our last issue, is published by the Labour Research Dept., and not by the Labour Party, as stated.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

The Economic Review. (Review of the Foreign Press, Ltd., Watergate House, Adelphi, W.C.2. Weekly, 1s.)

Village Trade Unions in Two Centuries. By Ernest Selley. (Allen and Unwin. 3s. net.)

Free World Songs. Guide to Eloquence and Acting. Venus, Adonis, and Mars. By Alex. Hunter. (Universal Publishing Co., Chorley, Lancs. 1s. each.)

White Capital and Black Slaves. A Missionary's Exposure of Commercial Exploitation in the East. (Reformer's Bookstall, Glasgow. 1d.)

Lectures on Economic and Industrial History. By A. P. Yates. (Labour Pioneer Press, Merthyr. No price stated.)

Prisons as Crime Factories. By A. Fenner Brockway. (I.L.P., 2d.)

Karl Marx. The Man and his Work. Three Lectures and two Essays, by Karl Danneberg. ("Radical Review," New York. Obtainable from G. H. Shillito, 6 Heald Street, Castleford, Yorks. 1s. 6d., post paid.)

Capitalism and War. Tracts for the Times, No. 1. By Joe Walker. (4d. Wholesale or retail from Reformer's Bookshop, 103 Kirkgate, Bradford.)

OUR KEEN-A-BOB FUND

W. T. Levett, 1s.; L. Rimington, 2s. 6d.; Bargoed Industrial History Class, 9s. 3d.; E. J. Hodge, 10s.; Chopwell Boys, 16s. 6d.; Mr. Thomas, 4s.; E. Baker, 6d.; G. Melhuish, 5s.; Geo. Thomson, 2s. 6d.; R. Shotten, 1s.; W. S. Bowden, 5s. 6d. R. E. Perry, 1s.; Geo. Bullock, 2s. 6d. Total, £3 1s. 3d.

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