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THE PLEBS

*The Organ of the National Council
of Labour Colleges*

VOL. XIX.

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The Pleb Point of View



THESE notes this month will be brief. But there are two matters of first-rate importance to I.W.C.Ers on which some comment is necessary here. The first is the ratification, both by the Annual Meet and by the ballot of members, of the taking over of THE PLEBS and of Plebs publications by the N.C.L.C. ; with the consequent necessity for a re-organisation, on lines adapted to the new conditions, of the Plebs League. The second is the decision of the A.G.M. of the N.U.R.—in opposition to the recommendation of its Executive—to continue their support of the Labour College, London.

* * *

The taking over of this magazine and of our other publications by the N.C.L.C. is now only a matter of arranging certain practical details. It will make no difference either to the character or policy of THE PLEBS, or to the *personnel* of its staff and contributors. We want to emphasise this, because there is an idea abroad in certain quarters that the new arrangement has been caused by some sort of internal friction in our movement. This is not only untrue ; it is so far from the truth that it is comic. The "amalgamation" is the result of a keen desire for closer unity between the groups responsible for different phases of our work. And we have no manner of doubt that the new chapter on which THE PLEBS is now entering will prove the most successful of its career. Our magazine has a long record—eighteen years' unbroken run is surely something to boast about!—and we are starting in on the next eighteen with fresh enthusiasm.

* * *

The question of the future of the League is an issue of more immediate importance. On another page will be found a short report of the discussion at the Meet. The Executive's resolution was inspired by a desire to substitute for a *League* "clique" of London Plebs a committee composed of representatives from all parts of the country. The non-Londoners at the Meet were the first to emphasise the impracticability of this, at present—for reasons of expense. And the London "clique" was urged to carry on, at least for the time being.

The basis of League membership is to be discussed by representatives of the Plebs and the N.C.L.C. As we said last month,

we need an organisation of rank-and-file I.W.C.Ers. We also need a bigger circulation for this magazine. What we would like to work out is a scheme which combined a subscription to the magazine with League membership, and, if possible, offered certain benefits (for instance, a discount on published price of textbooks, etc.) to League members. This, of course, is merely the "material basis." The first business of every Pleb, now as heretofore, will be to make converts to the idea of Independent Working Class Education. The League is going on. So any comrade who has put his badge away in the bottom drawer, under the delusion that we were going out of business, can get it out and polish it up again.

* * *

The N.U.R.'s decision to continue support of the London College is a real victory for I.W.C.E. In saying that we do not for a moment intend to imply that we regard the *The Labour College, London* College, as it now is, as perfect. Everybody knows that those of us who regard the evening class side of our work as far and away the most important part of it are anxious to see (1) a closer relationship between the residential college and the provincial classes, and (2) certain changes in the methods and curriculum of the former designed to make its training more effective from the point of view of class-tutors. But the shutting down of the College would have had a far greater "moral" significance than the loss of a single institution. During the early years of our movement the Central Labour College *was* the movement. Those days are past. But our opponents, in the Labour movement and out of it, would have made the utmost of a victory on this issue to damage our work generally. That they were robbed of that victory is a tribute alike to the propaganda work on behalf of the I.W.C.E. which has been done inside the N.U.R., and to the sound working-class sense of the Railwaymen themselves.

Mr. Cramp's arguments in favour of closing the College hardly deserve consideration here. He had a good deal to say about "learning by rote" as compared with "true" education which aimed at developing a "free mind." In fact, he repeated by rote all the stock arguments of the W.E.A.er. We forbear making the obvious comment on the advantages of a "free mind" to a certain sort of T.U. leader; only remarking that we still believe a working-class mind to be of more value to the working class in the long run.

We regret that the A.G.M. turned down the N.C.L.C. scheme for running the College. But it is obvious that far-reaching changes must come shortly; and it is up to I.W.C.Ers to see to it that those changes result in an institution of real value to the working-class educational movement.

J.F.H.

TRADES COUNCILS TO THE FORE

IT is more than three years since an article on Trades Councils appeared in the columns of THE PLEBS. Early in 1924 there were a series of articles and letters on "The Revival of Trades Councils." The discussion at that time revolved round the question as to whether Trades Councils were obsolete weapons in the class struggle.

That discussion, settled at the time by the activities of the Trades Councils themselves under Communist and Left-Wing influence, has now been disposed of for ever by the events of May, 1926. Insufficient though it was, the part played by the Trades Councils in the General Strike points the way to the future, and the records of that struggle given in some detail in Burns' *Trades Councils in Action*, published by the Labour Research Dept. last year, should be carefully studied by every working-class fighter and leader.

In 1924, when the very idea of a General Strike was being pooh-poohed and laughed out of court as quite out of the question for such a country as ours by many of the greater as well as the lesser lights who afterwards had to head one, it was mainly to the Communists and the Left-wingers of the Minority Movement that such a statement as "We have moved somewhat since Trades Councils were the order of the day, and I don't think we want them back again" seemed fantastic and out of all relation to working-class problems and the realities of the situation.

The danger of the rival movement obliged the T.U.C. General Council to take the Trades Councils into account, and in May, 1924, a Provisional Joint Consultative Committee was set up. This body called a National Conference of Trades Councils early in 1925, at which it was agreed to establish connection with the T.U.C. General Council by setting up a *permanent* Joint Consultative Committee. A series of Area Conferences followed, and in June, 1925, the T.U.C.G.C. strengthened the tie by issuing a monthly report called *The Trades Council Report*, and has continued it right to the end of 1926, when it was enlarged and its title changed to *The Industrial Review*.

The purpose of the *Review*, as of the *Report*, is to act as the official means of communication between the G.C. of the T.U.C. and the affiliated Trade Unions and Trades Councils. More attention ought to be given to this organ of the T.U.C. by T.U. branches and Trades Councils, and every endeavour should be made to give it the widest possible circulation amongst the Trade Union membership. Trades Council Secretaries should send in to it

reports of their activities and statements of their local problems and grievances and help to widen the scope and influence of the paper. The possibilities of the *Review*, whose title only is unfortunate, are greater than at first appears.

The policy of the General Council through the J.C.C. has been to set up an all-inclusive Federation of Trades Councils for England and Wales, which has been mapped out into six areas for the purpose. Within each area are a number of divisions varying according to the needs of the area. Each division is formed of from one to four local Federations of Trades Councils to suit the district needs. The Trades Council Consultative Committee is formed by one representative from each of the six areas.

The objects of the Federation have been laid down as follow :—

- (1) To act as the centre of communication for affiliated Trades Councils and to *supervise and co-ordinate the activities of the constituent Trades Councils.*
- (2) To assist in the organisation of new Trades Councils where necessary and to afford such support as may be possible to those Councils in its area which are unable to function effectively.
- (3) To work in conjunction with Trades Councils and the T.C. Joint Consultative Committee in instituting such improvements in organisation as may from time to time be found desirable, and to *render assistance to Trades Councils to obtain 100 per cent. affiliation of Trade Union branches.*

To further the second object it is understood that where none exist the industrial sections of Labour Parties shall be set up in accordance with the Labour Party constitution.

It is obvious that these new arrangements provide a great opportunity for the Trades Councils themselves both to enlarge their scope and to extend their influence, and that two channels are now available for pressing forward an active and militant policy upon the chiefs of the movement.

The T.U. branch can press through their National E.C. direct to the T.U.C. and indirectly through their local Trades Council and the Federation. It is up to the Trades Council to make use of both channels for making their local needs and grievances felt. Perhaps the Trades Council Federation machinery may be found more flexible and less bureaucratic than that of the Trade Unions, and the feeling of the rank and file for a militant policy or concerted action may make itself felt on the T.U.C. General Council quicker and as forcefully *via* the Federation Joint Consultative Committee than *via* the National E.C.'s.

The General Council has also approved a set of model rules and a constitution for Trades Councils ; but these rules limit their scope

to Trade Unions and branches of Trade Unions. This is too limited a basis. Locally as well as centrally there must be some co-ordinating link between all the bodies that represent the worker in a locality. That link must be the Trades Council, and in his address of 1925 to the first National Conference of Trades Councils called under T.U.C. auspices, Mr. A. B. Swales, then Chairman of the T.U.C.G.C., emphasised this point of view thus: "We do not want Trades Councils to be *purely* strike committees and *nothing else*, as they were originally. We cannot afford to neglect political action, the development of our co-operatives, the movement for independent working-class education, our women's, youths' and children's movements, our social organisations, and so on. The Trades Council to-day is really not a 'trade' council in the old restricted craft sense; it is a council of workers' representatives from various working-class organisations—industrial, political, and in some cases co-operative—met to consider how conscious working-class action can be taken in regard to every sphere of activity."

Resolutions adopted at the annual conferences of Trades Councils have given additional support to this wide basis, and bearing in mind that the model rules are after all only a guide and not an order, Trades Councils will do well to follow the lines indicated by Swales.

In any new great struggle for which preparations ought now to be going on and not when the crisis is actually at hand, the General Council will be in much closer touch with the localities through its Federation machinery than it has ever been before. Whatever its lead may be (and it may again be driven reluctantly to strike action sooner than any of us think), its lead can only be applied successfully when the Trades Councils in all localities are representative of all working-class organisations in its field of operations, including Co-operatives, Women's Guilds, Workshop Committees, I.L.P. groups, Communist locals, etc. But most essential of all is the direct representation of every T.U. branch and T.U. District Committee in its area.

Any forward policy for Trades Councils must necessarily be along lines that will secure the local workers' support. Hundred per cent. organisation of branches and of workers to those branches means very careful, systematic and detailed attention to the workers' needs and those of their wives and families. In addition, it requires an appreciation of and propaganda in explanation of wider working-class issues. Political and industrial activities must be linked up; and any propaganda, Trade Union or not, should aim at developing a consciousness of the class struggle.

No Trades Council can hope to be fully effective without some sort of local "rag." Whether it runs a duplicated Bulletin or a printed paper must naturally depend on local finances; but a newspaper of some kind is essential for keeping its members well informed

and to counteract the moves of the enemy. A Trades Council that has not yet got one cannot be considered to have taken the first effective step to consolidate its power and influence.

When Councils of Action are needed, it is the Trades Council that should call them into being and upon whom the responsibility for their direction and activities should fall. That is to say, they should be Committees of Action under Trades Council guidance.

It is important to notice that Trades Councils are now expected to know and carry out the lead given by the G.C. of the T.U.C. At the same time they now have a means of influencing that lead which did not exist three or four years ago. There need to-day be no hesitation in putting through to the G.C. the Trades Council's point of view on great and small issues. It is, of course, little use challenging a lead if the G.C. are able to retort that they have not been kept properly acquainted with the Trades Council's views.

In the case of the Blackleg Bill, for example, the Trades Councils could have done much more than they have done to challenge the G.C. policy of "Wait for a Labour Government to repeal it." It is a good thing, of course, to explain to the workers the effects of such a Bill when it becomes law, to let them know that it is intended to put a brake on their industrial power, etc., etc., and to denounce the Government that is making such a Bill law in the very strongest terms of which the present leaders are capable; but the workers will obviously shrug their shoulders and say, "Is that all you are going to do about something that you say is worse than Mussolini has ever done to the Trade Unions of Italy?"

There is one field of activity for the T.C. which offers great promise, and that is the womenfolk and the youth. The test of an active T.C. is its concentration upon this field. It is not only the women in the factories, workshops and offices, but the housewife and the domestic worker that need to be brought to a consciousness of the class struggle. These and the young workers especially ought to be told the value and place of the various Labour organisations and what the Labour movement stands for.

The Trades Councils should take the lead in the celebration of the principal Labour days, such as International Co-operators' Day, International Women's Day, International Labour Day (May the first). It is true that a great deal of the work and the organisation of the arrangements for these days are in the hands of other bodies, but the Trades Council can see that support is obtained from every possible source and widen the appeal to every section of the workers. Workers' sports have not yet received the impetus from the T.C.'s that they merit, and here is a field that could well be developed.

E. R. POUNTNEY.

“SUPER-PROFIT” and WEST AFRICA

WEST AFRICA differs from other African colonies in several important respects. The natives have not suffered dispossession of land to any appreciable extent, as they have in South and East Africa. A plantation system based on wage-labour is comparatively undeveloped, being found only to a small extent in Southern Nigeria. In general the British West African colonies constitute a system of primitive small-scale peasant economy, producing for export, with British capital playing the rôle of trading capital, buying agricultural products from these peasant producers and selling to them imported manufactures in return. Industrial capital directly employing wage-labour is, of course, to be found, mainly in mining of tin in Northern Nigeria, of a little coal in Southern Nigeria, and of gold, manganese and diamonds in the Gold Coast; and “forced labour” is used by the Government on “essential public works.” But it is the relation of trading capital to native peasant economy that is the principal and characteristic feature of West Africa. It is this which has caused the title of the “model colony” to be applied to these colonies; and it is this characteristic feature which makes the new study in the Colonial Series of the Labour Research Department* of special importance to a study of Imperialism.

Hitherto in this country there has been very little detailed analysis of the precise economic mechanism of Imperialism. There has been a certain amount of general talk about “over-production at home,” “capitalism’s need for new markets,” “finding an outlet for the surplus,” and so forth. Some have mentioned “markets,” others “raw material supplies,” others “spheres of investment” as the *rationale* of colonial expansion; to which has been added a reference to a few obvious facts, such as the growth of capitalist industry in colonial countries, competing with our own, and the growth of a colonial proletariat. The moral is then drawn that Imperialism is “wicked,” is harmful to the British worker and leads to war, and that sometime in the future—a fairly long time in the future—the growth of a Labour movement in those countries, supported by our own, will introduce Socialism. And there in the overwhelming majority of cases the matter is left.

Such a treatment of the question fails to give any unitary explanation of Imperialism, misses some of its significance, and is responsible for a good deal of misunderstanding of the position of colonial countries and of colonial nationalism. “Exploitation” may be spoken of in connection with Imperial development; but the precise

* *British Imperialism in West Africa*, by Elinor Burns (L.R.D., 6d. and 1s.).

character of this exploitation is probably not analysed, or else is made to apply to specific acts of dispossession and in a purely narrow sense to the employment of wage-earners in factories. Such a slurring of the essential features of the problem leads, on the one hand, to what the Russians call "Economism"—a narrow concentration on purely sectional trade union matters—or, on the other hand, to an acceptance of "Empire Socialism" and the ideology of the "Commonwealth of Nations." If "exploitation" under Imperialism consists merely in specific acts of robbery and does not assume a regular form until a wage system appears, then the remedy simply consists in "reforming" Imperialism so as to abolish specific acts of robbery and oppression; while, as at home, so in the colonies, the remedy for capitalist exploitation lies in the building up of socialism—in a word, socialising the Empire. To this view, West Africa, where the native still retains his land and a system of wage-labour is undeveloped, appears indeed as a "model" colony. Nationalist aspirations in the colonies are only of interest to Labour in so far as they call for "sympathy" in some specific act of oppression: apart from that, such nationalist tendencies are, if anything, definitely reactionary.

The crucial point which is passed over in such a treatment of the question is the fact that a whole country can be exploited by another capitalist country in the process of trade between them, just as one class can be exploited by another class. Exploitation can take place in the course of exchange between two groups, provided (a) the groups are separate and distinct (*i.e.*, there is no possibility of any appreciable movement from one group to the other), (b) the two groups are unequally placed with regard to their economic powers of production. This will tend to occur in all trade between a technically advanced capitalist country and a more backward country. Trade between the two will not be equal, but, in a sense, unequal; so that the former country can obtain in the course of trade the products of several units of labour from the "backward" country in return for the product of each unit of its own labour that it has to expend in its export trades: it gets more than it gives in exchange. The reason is that, while the advanced country can produce things with a relatively small expenditure of labour—at a small real cost—the backward country can only produce those things itself at a much greater real cost, and so, in order to obtain them by foreign trade, is willing to give a relatively large equivalent in return. Hence the backward country, at the same time as it is being exploited through trade, yet, as Marx said, benefits from that trade. The benefit which the advanced capitalist country gets takes the form of *super-profit*—an additional profit which the capitalist class of that country can secure out of foreign

trade, and which will tend to be spread over the whole capitalist class by virtue of the movement and competition of capitals. It will accrue to a country which is technically more advanced than others, has a monopoly of special natural advantages (mineral, climatic, etc.) or possesses any other differential advantages. For instance, British capitalism was in this position in the middle of the 19th century, when its industry had a virtual monopoly in the markets of the world, including those of Europe.

The Imperialist stage begins when the advanced capitalist countries, reaching a state of monopoly, begin to extend political control over backward, non-capitalist countries — convert them into “colonies” — in order thereby to improve the terms of exchange with the colonial countries, and so to increase the super-profit acquired by foreign trade, or to arrest a decline of it. Attempts are made to turn these colonies into “private markets” or special preserves for the capitalists of the Imperialist countries, just as did the mercantilist nations of the 17th and 18th centuries in dealing with their colonies. Foreign competition being wholly or partly eliminated in trading with these colonial “preserves,” chartered companies, trusts, cartels and financial syndicates can eliminate competition further and secure well-nigh complete monopoly power. Political influence ensures a preference in the granting of privileges, concession-rights, orders for constructional work, loans, etc., to the capitalist groups of the Mother Country. Special pressure may be exerted on native producers (*e.g.*, by taxation, burden of indebtedness) making them more willing to push their sales and sell their products cheaply for export. Hence, even when there has been no dispossession of the native and no creation of a wage system, the native agricultural producers, mostly peasants, are exploited by Imperialism through trading and financial capital. Further pressure on the colonial peasantry may lead to the creation of a dispossessed proletariat, and exploitation then takes its most direct and complete form with industrial capital employing wage-labour on large-scale plantations or in manufacture. The final stage may be where industrial capital transfers from production in the home country to producing the same things in the colonies with colonial labour, whereby a higher rate of profit can be earned (*e.g.*, cotton and jute in India), probably patching up a compromise with the colonial industrial capitalist for the latter to share as junior partners in these profits and politically share in a measure of “Home Rule within the Empire.” If, however, a colonial capitalist industry develops, competing with the Mother Country, or a colonial movement of revolt forces the Imperialist country to lessen some of the pressure of its exploitation, it reduces the super-profits that can be acquired and so tends to produce a decline in the position of that

Imperialist Power. The reason for referring to the decline of British capitalism at the moment is because the rise of foreign competition in world markets and the rise of colonial capitalism and colonial nationalist movements of revolt are lessening the super-profit which British capitalism can draw from her international position.

The first complete treatment of this conception of Imperialism and of the significance of super-profit, so far as I know, appeared in a discussion between H. P. Rathbone and Emile Burns in the pages of a contemporary a few months ago.* The conception is important because it shows the real historic significance of colonial nationalism. Colonial nationalism has so far usually begun with the rise of a native bourgeoisie and native *intelligentsia*, who rely for support upon the peasants, urban petty bourgeoisie and workers, on whom the chief burden of exploitation rests. The colonial bourgeoisie, however, only want freedom to develop their own colonial capitalism, and so are soon likely to break off from the general movement and accept a few concessions from the Imperialists, particularly if the masses behind them push forward too strongly so as to frighten them. But if the movement has been previously rooted in the masses, the main nationalist struggle is likely to continue, in spite of bourgeois defection; and this struggle of the peasants and workers and urban petty-bourgeoisie, on the contrary to being "reactionary," is part of the same struggle against exploitation by capitalist Imperialism as the European workers are carrying on; and therefore the colonial nationalist struggle and the struggle of the workers at home are part of a common struggle of allies on two sectors of a common front. Nevertheless, it remains true that this nationalist struggle only tends to take on an organised form (as distinct from spasmodic revolts and riots), and to have an uncompromising constructive goal to the extent that the colonial workers take the lead in this struggle. Hence the falsity of the colonial workers' movement following a narrow "economist" road.

As the pressure of the colonial movement gets greater, it becomes increasingly difficult for the Imperialist country to draw super-profit on the old level, and this produces a tendency to decline and chronic crises at home. In turn, the Imperialist country, faced with this desperate plight, is more and more driven to increase the pressure on the colonial peoples, to use Amritsar methods to suppress the colonial revolt, and so ultimately provokes increased resistance and a broadening of the anti-Imperialist movement (as in Java and Samoa at present). A study of West Africa is of particular interest, because hitherto exploitation has taken mainly the form of exploitation by trade of small peasant producers of rubber, oil, palm, cocoa, cotton. In this, large trading

* *The Communist*, for March and April.

companies like the Niger Company have played a large rôle and made large profits. Hitherto it has been thought more satisfactory to leave the peasant in possession of his land, and to safeguard him in that possession ; partly owing to certain difficulties in inaugurating the plantation system, partly because dispossession would cause tribal revolts and it would cost money to restore order. Hitherto it has been cheaper to administrate through the native chieftains wherever possible. Recently, however, Lord Leverhulme has voiced the need for cheapening the price of oil palms still further, and this can only be done by the inauguration of the more efficient plantation system, which will require a proletariat to work it ; and Lord Leverhulme has even proposed that, in the absence of a dispossessed proletariat, the Government should find the labour as it does for "essential public works." This means that British capitalism is feeling the need to increase the pressure on West Africa, which will tend to lead, either to a change in the land policy towards the peasant and his dispossession, or at any rate to a depression of his position by the competition of plantation products. At present the matter is in the discussion stage ; but with the decline in British capitalism's super-profit, the need for more intense exploitation of West Africa will tend increasingly to be felt. If this occurs, the nationalist movement which to-day has sprung into being in China may to-morrow spring up on the African Continent as well, and to such movements it would be the duty of the British workers to stretch out an ally's hand.

M. H. D.

WORKERS' WIVES AND EDUCATION

Much has been said recently about the importance of developing I.W.C.E. among women. The writer of this article, which appeared originally in the American LABOR AGE, gives cogent reasons for paying as much attention to women as to men in our educational movement.

IT is extremely unfortunate that the education of the wives of the workers has been so largely neglected. For the power of the women to help or hinder their husbands in their union activities and particularly during strikes cannot be over-estimated. And whether women use this power to support their husbands vigorously or by their complaints make the task of the men more difficult depends so largely on their attitude towards the union and its works (an attitude determined by what they know about the union) that the education of women seems a venture of the greatest practical importance.

During a strike it is the woman who suffers most ; it is she who must feed her children and provide them with whatever necessities she can manage to procure. It is she who must keep the house running though her husband is on strike and unable to provide her with the funds necessary for it. Yet all the while she is kept unaware of the details of the struggle which is causing her suffering.

Her husband is on strike, thrilled on the picket line, fighting the police ; in the meeting hall where the speakers explain to him the problems with which his union is confronted, the aims and objects of the strike ; in his contact with his fellow-workers, fighting for the same cause. All this gives him much emotionally as well as in experience ; for a person who is alert and capable of living fully through all the events of a strike must be enriched by his activity. He feels constantly the importance of being one of those engaged in the life-long struggle of the workers.

His wife, in the meantime, due to her position in the home, must remain far from the battlefield on which her husband is fighting. She goes on with her drudgery busily engaged in the daily routine tasks of the housewife. Uninformed of the issues of the struggle that led to the strike, it is natural that she should grow impatient as the struggle continues. She begins to annoy her husband when he comes home, exhausted, after a day of exciting toil ; she depresses him with questions ; she grows "touchy" ; she begins to bother him with her domestic problems.

The result is an exchange of unpleasant remarks which cannot lead to a better understanding of the problems with which husband and wife are confronted each day in their separate fields. The husband grows impatient with his wife who, he feels, "even in this great strike continues to be only a woman." He cannot understand why this life and death struggle in which he is engaged, one that will affect not only his well-being but hers and that of their children, a strike watched by millions of men and women, is of less importance to her with her "home economics" with its petty problems.

Does the husband stop to consider whose fault it is that his wife doesn't take the proper interest in a strike? Women have never been accused of lack of patience, endurance and willingness to suffer for a cause they understood. History records the devotion and the sacrifices they made in every great revolution. All the struggles of the oppressed of the world for freedom were enriched by the martyrdom of women who willingly gave of their best to a cause they desired ardently to succeed.

Women are always ready to give that support to a cause which they understand and of which they approve. And their support is made effective by their practicality and endurance—which all acknowledge them to possess. Women, whose task it has been to

bring up children, have acquired in that task infinite patience and willingness to endure. And their daily job as home keeper has also developed in them a profound practicality, a realistic approach to all the problems facing them, for the slightest mistake might be fatal to their children, their husbands, their homes. There is no doubt that women can be convinced of the importance of the Labour movement. They can be made to see how the ultimate ideals of the movement may be brought nearer day by day by advances that bring with them immediate advantages. They can be brought to realise when the needs of the worker make a strike necessary.

The experience of the 40,000 striking cloakmakers of New York City, members of the I.L.G.W.U., in their struggle of 1926 gave practical point to this view. In the seventeenth week of that strike, when no prospect of a speedy termination was in sight, the leaders of the strikers turned to their members' wives in a successful effort to win their moral support. But this enlightenment should not be left for strike time. Women should be interested in the Labour movement when the strain on them is not so great. Then they will realise when the strike comes that it is a last resort for the attainment of ends whose importance they will understand.

The education of the wives of workers has another very significant reason to recommend it, the potent influence on children that women possess. A study of the lives of many of the world's great men reveals that almost all of them were inspired by their mothers. Most of them ascribed their achievements to this maternal influence. As workers, we want our children to understand the problems, the purpose, and aims of the Labour movement to which their parents belong. We want them to know the trials and tribulations, the victories and defeats, the joys and despairs their parents experienced in the process of building their unions, the supreme sacrifice many of them made for the cause of the workers. Who can bring these to the child's consciousness better than the mother?

But if the Labour movement is to win the full-hearted support and co-operation of the wives of its members, they must be treated as equals. They must be taken into the confidence of the men and inspired to realise their importance as a social force. The men must frankly share with them their experiences and keep them fully informed about the affairs of the organisation. So informed they will be willing to place at the disposal of the Labour movement their will-power, their practicality, their influence to aid their husbands in the struggles of the movement.

FANNIA M. COHN.

SOCIAL IDEOLOGY IN THE CINEMA*

THE selective cinema public is relatively very small. The people who are influenced in their selection or in their pleasant recollection of a film by its differences from other films, who choose a particular cinema theatre to see a particular film, are so few as to be a negligible element to those engaged in the industry of film-making and film-showing. The people who regularly visit the cinema, the people on whose pleasure-purchasing power the industry depends, desire to repeat a well-known experience in all its essentials, rather than to discover a new one, however interesting. Their favourable measure of a film depends on its similarity to other films previously seen and experienced rather than to any merits of its own.

We know well that this class of persons exists also among the reading and the theatre-going public. There is a type that regularly purchases and reads a particular weekly or monthly magazine without paying attention to or perhaps even being aware of the names of the authors of the stories it contains. There is a similar type that asks over the counter of the circulating library for "two or three light novels lasting about a week-end," without caring about their identity, and placing their reliance on the quality usually stocked. Such persons, and they are so considerable a proportion of the cinema public as to be almost equal to its whole, regularly attends its own local cinema weekly or bi-weekly, or selects one of two alternative local cinemas from habit rather than because of the contrasted merits of their programmes in any particular week.

The kind or quality that these masses are seeking is called, in the jargon of books, theatre and cinema alike, "entertainment." In the cinema this type of experience, the reception of "entertainment," is the characteristic one. The number of discriminating persons who select, who are influenced in their purchase of an experience by its individual character and their own, though less always than the number on the lookout for the kind of experience described as entertainment, is sufficient to sell a book or to cause a play to be written or even produced. The production of a play of individual character need be neither charity nor financial suicide if it strike to the taste of a group of discriminators even so small as the capacity for a short time of a single theatre. But the process of making and showing a film, of getting a set of reasonably clear, visible and expressive images into the celluloid, in the first place, and out of it on to the screen, in the second, is a process so

*This article has had to be shortened from its original form by reasons of space.

costly that it is only practicable if it provides satisfaction for the inmates of many hundreds of theatres, a group so great it can only be formed from that of "entertainment" seekers. If we consider social ideology in literature or in the theatre, we can approach the matter from either of two roads. Directly, by the analysis of the material in the entertainment group of writings or stage-shows, and indirectly by analysis and inference regarding the environmental influences determining the individual natures of particular authors, who are, in consciously expressing themselves, acting as the unconscious filter of their surroundings. In the cinema the direct road is the only appropriate one, because, for the reasons given above, it is not practicable to make an appeal to individual taste, and accordingly individual expression occurs only rarely and uncharacteristically.

Now what is the nature of this experience, this reception of "entertainment"? It is not a certain widespread taste that may be better or worse than another taste, or at least comparable to it; it is an experience quite different from the satisfaction of a taste. It is in the nature of a release of repression, repression relating usually to the sexual or economic life of the individual and thus peculiarly illuminating sociologically. And that is why the cinema, providing, as it does, conditions peculiarly suitable physiologically and psychologically for the release of repression, provides the perfect exemplar of this entertainment. A cinematographic performance takes place in conditions of relative comfort (the seats are as a rule more easy than those to which the average spectator is accustomed in his home), relative darkness (the conditions provide more privacy than those to which the average spectator is accustomed in his home), and in the presence of warmth and music. These conditions are peculiarly favourable to the construction of fantasies. The film, then, always takes the character of an illustration and aid to the repression fantasies of the normal citizen, whose own imagination cannot operate so vividly unassisted. In a capitalist civilisation in which the mating of the common citizen is so hampered and indissoluble, and in which the worker's life, from the smallness of his purse, is so constantly sordid and disappointing, the films always assume the character of histories of sexual relations between attractive protagonists, long delayed and frustrated but reaching eventual consummation. In a system in which the common citizen is engaged in an occupation from which he derives little satisfaction, and which he endures only as an earning chore or task, in which, moreover, the worker is a wage-slave or subordinate, his fantasies always deal with heroes who act throughout only of their own free will, who begin despised, climb the social ladder and end triumphant and honoured. It has been remarked that the art of a

healthy community is tragedy, and from this view-point the very prevalence of the happy or triumphant ending is an indication of the repressed and unsatisfactory life of the common member of society.

Not only in this general manner, but in detail also, is the cinema a museum or exposé of social ideology. The need of the spectator to identify himself or herself, and his or her desired opposite, with the hero and heroine, precludes the protagonists of films from being mixed in their attributes just as it prevents them from being mixed in their adventures and fortunes. The nature of the popular ideal man and woman, both physically and in their life histories, can be seen by a study of the hero and heroine. For example, they must be lucky or tricky rather than clever; strictly virgin before marriage and faithful afterwards; intensely flirtatious; always ill-educated, and have no interests in life beyond those sensual, money-making, or patriotic (this last interest must be spontaneous and never reasoning); they may be poor at first but are only excused for so being if they become rich and smartly dressed before the conclusion of the story; the former must caress dogs, the latter must kiss babies and wear fine underclothes, and both must be philoprogenitive. These qualifications are imposed by capitalist film manufacturers, not from any deep propaganda purpose, but because, in seeking a maximum sale, they must mirror the prevailing social ideology.

In a civilisation such as the Russian different social ideals are naturally present. As in the West, it is necessary for film producers to achieve popular success and to provide entertainment, and the measure of their success indicates the degree to which their output may be regarded as a crystallisation of popular fantasy, fruitful for study. Here, instead of the ideal being represented as a worker who leaves behind his comrades and enemies in their original condition of toil (because in Western ideology poverty is in reality disgraceful), in Russia the worker gains satisfaction by seeing his incarnation—a worker at the end as at the beginning—earning a universal respect and authority as the story unfolds, and, in his capacity as worker, having opportunity to triumph at least in moral virtue, over the unscrupulous and perhaps better-off White or speculator. As sexual repression of the type engendered by outdated religious survival in the West is almost absent, the sexual excitement story type of "entertainment" is also absent.

The generalisations above expressed regarding the character of the films current in capitalist and in Russian society must be regarded as further delimited by the national and racial traits of national film-producing groups. Certain films of popular "entertainment" content are made in France and Germany in

which, however, the protagonists remain peasants throughout, these are suitable to the unambitious and static peasant populations of these countries. America has large peasant populations, but most of these are not static, the mechanical development of the country tends to present always to them the benefits of luxury, and so determines the character of the triumph depicted at the end of an American picture even of agricultural persons. In Russia, and in Germany also, the more alert fantasy-forming natures of the peoples concerned make it satisfactory to cast the scene of an entertainment story in costume, and at an earlier historical period than the present, though the tougher imaginations of English and American public make such a course fatal to enjoyment by the latter.

It must be noted that certain films have in the past been made which are not classable as "entertainment," but are definitely individual creations of their authors, whether of limited or of no mass appeal as the case may be. Such were made very generally in Germany and occasionally in other continental countries, in the days of their inexperience. Such are also the few that have been made by persons sophisticated themselves but whose backers were not fully aware of what was afoot, for example, Chaplin's "Woman of Paris," Stroheim's "Greed," Griffith's "Broken Blossoms." They have invariably been commercially unsuccessful, even in the country of origin. The fact that they are uncharacteristic and untypical of the function of the cinema in capitalist society is evidenced by the fact that their manufacture is now, with the rarest exception, discontinued. Such productions tend to persist only in Russia, where the control and monopoly of cinemas by the State manufacturing bodies makes the latter slower to react to the desires of majority public groups.

IVOR MONTAGU.

LOGOPANDEKTEISION, or A Challenge to Esperantists

Delphos, by E. Sylvia Pankhurst (Kegan Paul, 2/6).

MISS PANKHURST'S book is a very interesting little sketch. It is short for half-a-crown, it has no index, and the Esperantists (rightly or wrongly) charge it with many inaccuracies. All the same, it raises in a convenient manner several of the most serious questions concerning an "inter-language," and it is time that the Esperantists dealt with them adequately.

Everyone is familiar with the need for an inter-language. When we meet foreign workers we are dumb; we are worse than animals, for, as Miss Pankhurst quaintly says, "the dogs exchange the courtesies of nose and tail." But this does not prove the case for Esperanto. There is a logical fallacy which runs like this: "A railwayman is a man, Blank, M.P., is a railwayman, therefore Blank, M.P., is a man"; or "A tiger is a cat, my Tibbles is a cat, therefore my Tibbles is a tiger." So we are presented with the argument: "The workers need an international language, Esperanto is an international language, therefore the workers need Esperanto." Having once begged the question like this, Esperantists chortle happily along, telling us of the great advantage of the use of this international language, how it will bring peace, how it will make International Labour Conferences more harmonious by reducing to *nil* the already small chances of rank and filers being elected as delegates, etc., etc. All very well, but are we sure that Esperanto is the language?

Commonly, Esperantists reply simply that now Esperanto has such an international popularity that it must be—that the mere number of its adherents has settled the question. But the wiser and more cautious Esperantists know this to be false. The angry shadow of Bishop Schleyer lies across them. The Bishop's international language, known as Volapük, achieved (allowing for nearly half-a-century's growth of population) a popularity almost comparable with Esperanto's. In 1889 there were 283 Volapük societies, a great Paris drapery store taught its shop girls Volapük, three highly-successful international congresses had been held in Volapük, the number of Volapükers, according to the claim in Clark's history (a pro-Esperanto tract) was 1,000,000, with "numerous newspapers." And after this the whole thing went absolutely to pieces. Volapük totally disappeared, and the time and trouble spent in learning it was utterly wasted. The students would have been better employed learning Greek. Attempts were made to save Volapük by reform—

“Dilpok” and so on—which led to splits (though to no split so serious as the Ido split in Esperanto) and only made the end more certain. Mere size is no criterion, and one does not want to waste time learning Esperanto if it is going to follow Volapük to the grave.

Volapük failed for two reasons—firstly, because Bishop Schleyer, the inventor, forbade change and thus prevented improvement; secondly, because it contained such serious defects of structure that it became a nuisance. (I take this explanation exclusively from Esperantist books.) The Esperantists have committed the first error. In 1894 Dr. Zamenhof, the inventor, considered the question of allowing certain changes, but decided not; and Esperantists have since followed that decision and are bound to a body of doctrine which they call the Fundament.

Has it also such serious defects that we may decide it has committed the second error also, and will consequently wither away like Volapük? I do not say it has; I only ask that a serious defence be offered for its many imperfections. Consider:

Firstly, it has an absurd alphabet. It has struck out the known European letters *Q*, *X*, *W*, and *Y*, and then inserted *ĉ*, *ĝ*, *ĥ*, *ĵ*, *ŝ*, *ŭ*. *Ŭ* is the English *w*, *ŝ* is “*sh*,” *ĉ* is “*tch*,” *ĝ* is *j*, *ĥ* is the Scotch “*ch*” or Greek *X*, and *ĵ* the French *j*. To accommodate these unnecessary and typographically ugly extra letters we should have to smash up our existing typewriters and alter our printing machines. (One naïve Esperantist reviewer of Miss Pankhurst’s book complained that the printer had not spent “a shilling or two on the type to print *ĉ*, *ŭ*,” etc. Obviously he had never seen a modern lino and believed printing was still done in the method of Caxton.) To avoid this, Esperantists sometimes replace “*Λ*” by *H*, thereby ignoring their own principle that each letter should have one sound and no more.

Secondly, it contains absolutely arbitrary words, and some that are extremely ugly and difficult to pronounce. The British Association’s Inquiry gave qualified praise to Ido because it tore out of Esperanto the “words arbitrarily invented” by Zamenhof. But De Beaufront, the leader of the Idists,* gave as a further reason the horrible noises he had been asked to pronounce, some of which he could not physically manage without injury to his jaw. His example was *ojn* [o-y-n], but we could also take *SV*, *KV*, especially at the beginning of words, or the order (Cox’s grammar) that *KZ*, a common collocation, must always be pronounced *k-z*, and never the natural *gz* or *ks*. (Try saying *ekzample* like that.) Again, *c* stands for the sound *ts*. Then Esperanto produces roots like *sci-* (know), which begins with the absurd noise *Sts*. Finding this impossible, the Esperantists then burst through their own fundamental rule that

* He had been a great propagandist of Esperanto and had been allowed to kiss Dr. Zamenhof in public. A pamphlet lent me by Mark Starr suggests that he was lucky to escape alive from the Esperantists when his “treachery” was discovered.

words are pronounced as spelt, and in Cox's Grammar we find the instruction that (*e.g.*) *mi havas sciuron* (I have a squirrel) is to be pronounced "mee hahvahs Estseeooron"—a non-existent E being thrust in. One is used to languages where you do not pronounce letters which are printed in a word—this is a new reform, to have to put in letters that are not there at all !*

Thirdly, the method of selecting the vocabulary is, in part, vicious. To understand this, one must explain further. International languages may be formed either (1) *a priori*, or (2) *a posteriori*. In the first case the language is formed purely by deduction, by a logical process. You say, for example, that the sound BO stands for a relation by marriage (an "in-law"); then you add to BO the syllables indicating "cousin" and "male," and you get a compound word meaning a man second-cousin. You can then go on (having memorised the necessary roots) to produce a single word meaning "the front door of the country house of second cousin Bert," and so on. All words can be analysed in accordance with known principles, and the language is purely logical. The purest examples of this is Timerio, which consists exclusively of numbers—"1/80/17" means "I love you." Solrésol is another; it consists of the notes of the solfa (Doh, rey, me, etc.) arranged in logical composition. The inventor, who really used it, could not only say, "Go and boil your head," he could sing it, play it on the piano, and by substituting the colours of the rainbow for notes, could convey the same message by fireworks or flags. But it is now generally recognised that such languages are impossibly difficult. Dr. Zamenhof himself started on this principle and proceeded from it towards the second—"a posteriori." This principle is quite different: the inventor notices that there is already a gigantic body of words or word roots (such as the root SENS or SENT for feeling) which are already internationally understood and used. He proceeds to construct his vocabulary from this existing body, and, by eliminating irregularities and annihilating grammatical rules as far as possible, to hasten the coming of a universal pidgin-language which "natural evolution" would perhaps in a few centuries produce. This body of existing international words is by general consent now allowed to be mainly Romance (*i.e.*, of Latin origin). One professor produced "Tutonish" based on German, and others have suggested Malay, Hindustani, Slav and Chinese, but without success. The Romance basis is forced on us also by the fact that a Romance inter-language is easily intelligible to all Spaniards, South and Central Americans, Italians, French, Rumanians, and to all American and English speakers of education enough to read their own literature.

Now Esperanto accepts this principle, but by an irrational sentimentality tries to admit other national roots out of "fairness." But

* Volapük barred even the sound R as too difficult for Chinese.

to take a scrap here and there from all over the world helps no one and confuses all. Suddenly dragging in the Russian CHERPAR for "draw" does not make the language easier for Russians, and is a stumbling-block for others. The Greek KAJ for "and" may soothe the pride of M. Venizelos; it is none the less an irrational nuisance. Further, this multiplicity of origin obscures even the meaning of Romance roots. In a Romance inter-language we know that ALT- means "high," but who now shall say that it does not, Teutonically, mean "old"? Or if ARM- means "poor," "upper limb," or "weapon"? Or KLEIN- "little" or "famous"? Or FRAG- a question, strawberry, or breakage?*

Worse still, in one case, Esperanto takes a common Romance prefix and changes its meaning, helping none and confusing all. It uses MAL for "contrary," in the sense that UN- (or perhaps rather DIS-) is used in English. But MALFERMI to every European suggests "to close imperfectly," not "open"; MALGRANDA, "evilly or wrongly great," not "small."

One reason of this is that Esperanto is not an *a posteriori* language, but is a mixture in which *a priori* elements (purely theoretical elements) survive, sometimes with quaint results. For example, the letters IN are inserted to indicate femininity, and so the internationally-understood root MATR- for "mother" is rejected in favour of *patrino*, on the convincing ground that a mother is a kind of father.

Fourthly—and I must stop soon—the grammar of Esperanto is retrograde. The older the language the more complex its inflexion. Not only do special endings express the object (*him* from *he*, for example), but the verb changes its form for past, future, conditional and other tenses, for the imperative and infinitive, for the participles, etc. In some of the older languages (*e.g.*, Greek) these variations run into hundreds of thousands for one verb—and even more with certain really primitive languages of America. Beauty of style, it is true, can be achieved by these means, but Esperantists convincingly denounce the incredible difficulty so caused. Each word, in fact, is a portmanteau of inflexions containing the person, number, time, etc., which has to be "unpacked" by the mind of the reader. These tenses and inflexions are disappearing even in living languages: English has no future tense, but uses "will" or "shall." Even in French, the "preterite tense" is little used; you do not say "*nous fabriquâmes une langue ridicule*," but "*nous avons fabriqués*." It is almost incredible, but in spite of their own arguments, an authoritative Esperantist grammar states that in Esperanto:

* Ido has the same fault. Another irrational choice of Esperanto is to put in the Italian "I" (j) as plural form instead of the Franco-Anglo-Latino-Greek "S."

Verbs have a Present tense,
 a Future tense,
 a Past tense,
 a Conditional mood,
 an Imperative mood,
 an Infinitive mood,
 three Active participles,
 three Passive participles.

Further—as though it were Ancient Latin—adjectives vary their terminations to agree with nouns, and nouns actually have an accusative case, taken, for greater illogicality, from the Greek.

* * *

Esperantists have so furious an attachment to their *Kara Lingro* (is that right?) that a word of personal explanation is needed for safety's sake. If these objections are answered, no one will be more willing than I to learn Esperanto. But when I sought to answer the question, "Shall I learn Esperanto?" there seemed many reasons for answering *No*, and even more for selecting Interlingua or some other obviously better language (not Ido). Of the first international language of all, Urquhart's *Logopandekteision*, the author said "no other language is able to attain unto it," and all others have since repeated that claim. I merely wish to make a serious inquiry into one particular claim.

Secondly, Mr. and Mrs. Paul once endeavoured to ride off from a controversy on the ground that they were "experts" and none but experts might argue with them. Therefore I suppose I had better produce my credentials which are (1) English, French, Latin, Italian, Greek; failed in German three times; (2) I once invented an artificial *a priori* language myself: it was as bad as any recorded in the history books.

RAYMOND W. POSTGATE.



Notes by the Way



Unity from Below.

WE commend heartily to our students—especially those in classes on Trades Unionism and members of the railway unions—the efforts being made to build up a Railway Workers' Joint Council. N.C.L.C. students and others of Newport and Pontypool Road were gravely concerned by bitter feeling left behind by the locomen's strike of 1924. A Council was set up jointly by N.U.R., A.S.L.E. & F. and R.C.A. representatives to lessen friction between the unions, prevent victimisation and attack non-unionism. Since then it has endeavoured to apply the 1924 Resolution of the T.U.C. and urged the national unions to table for discussion their respective schemes for fusion and federation. Its scope was widened after the National Strike to South Wales and conferences are proposed for Bristol, London, Birmingham, Sheffield and Scotland at which a draft programme will be discussed. Those anxious to help and to know more about this movement should write at once to W. T. Proctor, 48 Woodfield Road, Pontypool Road. The significance of this movement is that it is a spontaneous effort by members of the railway unions themselves—unaided and uncontrolled by any outside body—to find a working unity upon local and concrete problems which will surely form a basis for unity in larger questions and prepare finally for workers' control in railway transport.

Another useful piece of work deserving assistance is the investigation of nationalist and class bias in text-books being carried out by the Teachers' Labour League. A list of touchstones to be used in this will be sent upon request to F. C. Moore, 52 Monmouth Road, Wallasey. The League membership by the way is open to all educational workers. Now is the time to help.

M. S.

More Translations of Plebs Books.

We quote the following from the preface written by Chekin to the recently-issued Russian edition of our "Trade Unionism: Past and Future." Until

now we have not had a popular short history of Trades Unions. The books of the Webbs, Chekin, Kol and others are destined for other uses. Hence the usefulness of this book for the workers' library. The weakness of the book consists, according to the preface (1) in following the Webbs by over-emphasising the personal role of Place; (2) an incomplete explanation of the rise of the G.N.C.T.U. and consequently of its failure; (3) making the 'Forties too much the story of the Chartists and neglecting the increase of productivity and the appearance of a Labour aristocracy interested and benefitting in the progress of capitalism; (4) an insufficient explanation of why the General Council was set up. Apart from whether these criticisms are due to the limited size of the original booklet they certainly show a keen knowledge of British Trade Union development. A first edition of 3,000 copies is being sold at 50 kopeks each.

A Russian edition of the Plebs Atlas is also under way by the same publishers in Kharkov. The maps dealing with the British industrial regions are being substituted by ones dealing with Soviet Russia drawn on the same Horabin principle of cutting out every non-essential detail.

Some Joke!

Could there be a better exemplification of Utopian Socialism than the "gilet fraternel" the "brotherly waistcoat" of Saint Simon? This garment buttoned behind instead of in front. The need for assistance in putting it on was daily to remind the wearer of the great principle of human solidarity.

Labour Colleges; an Indian Opinion.

Apropos to the struggle to maintain a Labour College in Britain the following extract from the *Employees' Gazette*. Calcutta, March and April, 1927, issue. will be of interest.

"The Indian Trade Union movement still seems to be ineffective in its influence and assertion of workers' rights and also the power of organisation throughout the country. The main

reason appears to be that the All-Indian Trade Union Congress, which claims to lead and represent the Indian Labour movement, is callously indifferent in the matter of organisation and to educate the workers and masses in their rights and responsibilities, which alone can awaken consciousness and evoke greater solidarity among workers. The indifference on the part of the Congress is due to the fact that the group which was so far at the head of administration, had all along been more anxious for opportunities for sea voyages and short stays at Geneva or pleasure trips to Delhi or Simla through seats in the Legislative Assembly, though in the gift of the Government, than to look to the interests of the starving and down-trodden millions of workers. The next reason seems to be that the few workers with the working class mentality who had been in the movement, have either been cried down as extremists or Communists or Bolsheviks and harassed by the same group through the help of the "Law and Order" department of the Government, or censured and repressed within the institution on the strength of a fictitious majority created by hirelings recruited from among ambitious merchants, lawyers, and politicians. *Almost every day a new leader is coming into the movement, but without any credentials,*

or any knowledge of the working conditions of labourers. So far as we have studied the ins and outs of the Indian Labour movement, we are afraid the movement cannot be a solid one, unless and until it is run on sound lines and in the true interests of the workers alone and not of the few designing persons who are still exploiting labour for their own ends. *Further, to lead this movement, a band of selfless and trained workers are necessary, and for this purpose the Trade Union Congress should immediately devise means and ways for starting a Labour College on the lines of those in England and other foreign countries.* This would be a step in the right direction which will help the organised workers to equip themselves with the knowledge adequate for the accomplishment of their industrial and political tasks. *The fundamental principle and educational policy of the college should be to teach Trade Unionists the sciences which afford a penetrating insight into the deepest foundations of society, which disclose the processes by which social structures arise.*" (Italics curs.)

We can only add that the sentiments expressed above are very appropriate to our own Labour movement.

J. HAMILTON.

HOW TO MAKE A LANTERN LECTURE

The reason why lectures are considered so "dry" by the ordinary man in the street is that unless his whole brain is tuned up to reception point—as in the case of an enthusiastic Socialist all the time and the ordinary person at election times—it must be a strain for him to concentrate on what is being said.

There is a definite psychological reason for this. The human brain had already had a long development before it was called upon to deal with articulate speech. The eye on the other hand was one of its oldest instruments. This is the reason why a visual impression is stronger to most people than an oral one, especially as during ordinary speech the eye is also taking its impressions which may counteract those by ear.

In lecturing, if we can gain the attention of our listeners by both eye and ear, we make our work easier and

greatly enhance the understanding conveyed.

This is the importance of using as much as possible the magic lantern to illustrate lectures, especially when these are on difficult subjects. The conditions of darkness force the whole attention of the audience on the lighted screen, and there a picture stresses the particular point being explained by the lecturer.

This has its dangers as well as its advantages, for frequently slides can be obtained which illustrate the subject, but they emphasise the points which are *not* important. This must be avoided at all costs. It is delivering the wrong message. Neither is it necessary to make the illustrations an exhibition of art, though this is desirable if compatible with the main object. Every audience has imagination and the habit of make-believe has been with us since we were

children. A roughly-drawn picture may quite well be described as a house, and if it is funny, the humour and the make-believe help to make the lecture a success. There must, however, be in every district some comrade who is a good drawer, and by the simple process I am going to describe, it will be within the reach of every tutor to obtain some slides at very little expense.

How to Make Slides.

First of all it will be necessary to purchase a supply of glasses cut to the size of a slide, called "cover glasses." Glass itself cannot be drawn upon, and it is therefore necessary to create a surface capable of holding ink. This can be done by obtaining a little very fine size, dissolving it, and covering the glass by the aid of a fine camel-hair brush. Allow it to dry, when the glass will be ready to receive our drawing. Unless the person is a really good artist, he should trace his drawings from originals. In the case of maps for instance, any atlas will provide him with outlines of the country desired, and if he cannot afford to get the N.C.L.C. official slides on loan or purchase, the maps in *The Plebs* and the *Plebs Atlas* provide excellent material for copying. At least one quarter of an inch all round the slides should be left blank as this is taken up in the lantern-holder. The ink used should be Indian or draughtsman's ink, and the pen a mapping pen. They can be coloured by using red and green

inks which can be bought for twopence a bottle. A mapping pen enables us to print very neatly and draw fine lines.

After this drawing has dried, we should then cover it with another plain piece of glass to prevent the drawing being damaged, and the edge attached with gum paper or *passee partout*. This can be copied from any ordinary slide.

We should then give a title to our slide along the top edge so that it can be recognised without having to look through it against the light or white paper every time we are looking for it, and our slide can be said to be ready to emphasise the points we consider important in our lecture.

If possible, however, each district should endeavour to purchase a set of slides, to which each lecturer by the above method could add some slides of his own, emphasising the points he desires, making the lantern *illustrate* his lecture instead of, as is the temptation, allowing the illustrations to *dominate* the lecture.

In the case of photographs and slides, this can only be done by someone skilled in photography, and unless such a person is in the district, willing to help the college, it is better that such work should be done in a centralised way by the N.C.L.C.

If anyone is interested and finds any difficulty in carrying out the suggestions, a letter to *THE PLEBS* will obtain help and advice.

ARTHUR WOODBURN.

THE PLEBS ANNUAL MEET

KIPLING HALL, JULY 10th, 1927.

IT would be pleasant to report that a very crowded Annual Meet was held at Kiplin Hall on Sunday, July 10th, but, alas, it would not be true. We were few in numbers, but we were neither downhearted nor depressed, for the sun shone as it had not shone for a whole week, and we had the meeting out of doors. The businesslike way in which the agenda was discussed made up for the small attendance.

Mark Starr took the chair, and the Secretary, in a brief speech, stated that the two main items of business were the report of negotiations between Plebs and the N.C.L.C., details of which had appeared in the magazine and must now

be approved by the Annual Meet; and the future of the League. She expressed the belief that the League was still a vital and necessary part of the I.W.C.E. movement.

The Editor gave a report on sale of magazines and publications. In the ensuing discussion the main point which emerged was the suggestion by J. Hamilton that some scheme for an inclusive subscription which included the magazine, League and if possible some benefits in regard to publications should be devised.

The financial statement was read and accepted. (The Balance Sheet will be printed in a subsequent issue.)

J. F. Horrabin then moved the following resolution:—

"The E.C. recommends, in order to carry into effect the reconstruction of the League on the lines suggested in the agreement, the election of an E.C. consisting of one representative (of Plebs groups) within each of the Divisions of the N.C.L.C. (plus such officials as are decided upon) and in place of the monthly E.C. meetings held hitherto, the holding of quarterly week-end meets in different parts of the country, to which members would be invited."

Horrabin said that he would like any resolution passed to include the point raised by Hamilton, a comprehensive membership subscription. Members of the Executive Committee spoke in favour of the resolution, but delegates and representatives of the N.C.L.C. pointed out that it was impracticable (because

of finance) to include provincial members as yet, and suggested that the present formation of the E.C. should be continued until the membership of the League was built up. The E.C. resolution was then withdrawn in favour of the following:—

"That this Plebs Meet instructs the present Plebs E.C. to work out a scheme of re-organisation of the Plebs League in conjunction with the N.C.L.C., and for this purpose they are given full powers to come to an agreement on the general lines suggested by the discussion."

We were glad to have the pleasure of meeting once again comrades from Manchester and Thornaby-on-Tees groups. From correspondence received it was clear that financial difficulty was the only obstacle to other groups being represented.

W. H.

L  *e*  *t*  *t*  *e*  *r*  *s*

OXFORD "SNAGS."

Sir,—W.H.M. says that he "would support any scheme for sending trade unionists to Oxford because I think it would be a very good thing for Oxford." There might be some intelligence behind W.H.M.'s argument if the trade union movement had itself cleared its mind of false governing class conceptions. It has not reached that stage yet by a long chalk.

Perhaps W.H.M. will tell us whether he thinks Oxford's anxiety to get trade unionists within its walls is for the good of the trade union movement? In answering the question he will bear in mind that Oxford is frightened of women attending its University, far less representatives of the proletariat.

Yours,
S. L. C.

Comrade Editor,—What a Don Quixote mission W.H.M. plans for trade unionists in converting the heathen of Christ Church and Balliol! What sort of harvest does he expect? Perhaps after ten years a dozen undergraduates may have been persuaded into ardent Fabianism, and another dozen be converted into gentle dissertations upon nationalisation over the Turkish cigarettes and China tea! And to reap that harvest we've got to sacrifice generations of our best trade union scholars to learning out-worn philosophies, and to the risk of themselves being permeated rather than permeating. The barbarians would hardly have broken the Roman Empire if they had merely settled down as occasional citizens in Rome.

Yours,
Z.

The N.C.L.C. at Work



(Reports for this page should be sent to J. P. M. Millar, General Secretary, National Council of Labour Colleges, 62 Hanover Street, Edinburgh.)

NEW LOCAL AFFILIATIONS: The following is a list of the new affiliations obtained in June by the local Colleges:— London, 6; Glasgow, 2; South-East Lancs., 1; Woolwich, 1.

NATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL: In consequence of a number of delegates being appointed at the last minute to attend the Annual Meeting and Summer School, the whole of the arrangements with regard to housing the students were upset. Moreover, many of those who had booked weeks beforehand had to be put to considerable inconvenience in order to house those who only a few days beforehand intimated their intention of coming or who came without any advice at all. Colleges are asked to note this matter for the future as late appointments are not fair either to the other students and delegates or to the staff of the Guest House which is faced with the task of housing an impossible number of people.

ANNUAL MEETING: Fifty-five (55) delegates attended the N.C.L.C.'s Annual Meeting. Unions having N.C.L.C. Schemes were well represented as was each Division. A careful survey was made of the past year's work. The Conference approved of the taking over of all Plebs publications. During the year ending March, 1927, despite the fact that many classes were shut down or not held at all in consequence of the General Strike, the class students increased from 30,398 to 31,635, while the Correspondence Course students showed the remarkable increase of from 1,455 to 2,702.

PADIHAM WEAVERS' UNION: This Union has arranged an Educational Scheme with the N.C.L.C. providing free access to classes, free correspondence courses, etc.

MILITARY MUSICAL INSTRUMENT MAKERS: This Union has also arranged the usual N.C.L.C. Educational Scheme.

LONDON LABOUR COLLEGE: Readers will be pleased to note that the N.U.R. A.G.M. turned down its Executive's decision to drop its connection with the London Labour College. The best of thanks to those responsible for this result.

LITERATURE ACCOUNTS: College Committees are urged to go into the question of their Literature Accounts and ascertain that the amounts due to Plebs have been paid up-to-date.

DAY AND WEEK-END SCHOOLS.
Aberdeen, 7th August, 1927 (W. Morrison, 323 Holborn Street, Aberdeen).

Bristol, 13th August, 1927 (M. Evans, 8 The Chase, Hillfields Park, Fishponds, Bristol).

WHAT THE DIVISIONS ARE DOING.

Division 1: The London Division is arranging a garden party at Highfield, Golder's Green Road, N.W., on Saturday, 3rd September, commencing at 2.30 p.m. The usual sports, dancing, music and refreshments will make up the programme. Admission to the grounds 1/-. children free. A week-end school is being held on September 24th and 25th at Newdigate Camp, Surrey. The charge for the school and camp accommodation will be 9/-. As the accommodation is limited comrades are requested to send on immediately the booking fee of 2/6. The Day Schools at Mitcham, Sheerness and Tottenham during July were a great success. The London Divisional Council has now arranged for Comrades Cash, of Chatham, and Spillman, of Canning Town, to attend the fortnight's National Training Centre. The results of the recent Essay Examination in London are now available. The Ilford and Stepney classes each produced two first-prize winners, while Southall, Rotherhithe, Canning Town, Fulham and Mitcham classes turned out, in some cases, first-prize winners, and, in other cases, seconds and thirds. Nine book prizes have been awarded for the five subjects undertaken by the students. The Women's Committee

speakers have addressed a large number of meetings during the past two months and we are now certain of having many classes next winter.

Division 2: The Divisional Council selected Miss Trowbridge (Southampton) for the scholarship to the Training Centre, but, unfortunately, she cannot get the necessary leave. It is hoped to secure another student. Will all College and Class Secretaries please note that 17th September has been agreed to for the next Class Conference? The venue is Bournemouth. All resolutions for the agenda should be in the hands of the Organiser not later than 5th September. Congratulations to A. G. Smith, of the Bournemouth A.U.B.T.W. in securing his Union's free scholarship to the National Summer School. College Committees are urged to do everything possible to solicit the assistance of local Trades Councils. September is generally the best month for this work. All branches of affiliated unions have been offered special branch lectures and quite a number have accepted—particularly the A.E.U. It is too early to report on the success of the enterprise of the Oxford College, who have chartered a steamer to take 100 up the river. The programme is being arranged by a live Committee of N.C.L.C.ers. This example may stimulate others in a friendly rivalry as there is no question about the value of such meets.

Division 3: No report.

Division 4: No report.

Division 5: Newton Abbot College has held successful Branch Meetings in connection with the Anti-Trade Union Bill, Comrade Kershaw being the lecturer.

Division 6: No report.

Division 7: The Division is now in the midst of its summer activities. Certain Colleges have grouped together for the purpose of organising Day Schools. Keighley, Shipley, Bradford and Bingley Colleges have done this. At the Otley Clarion Camp eighty-four students attended, the Organiser taking the lectures. At Eldwich Comrade A. Haigh, of Leeds, lectured on "China." Owing to the bad weather only twenty-eight students attended. Seventy-four students attended Slaithwaite Day

School. Comrade D. Barnett (N.U.R. Nat. E.C.), 42 Spencer Road, Sheffield, lecture on "Russia As I Found It." The Organiser gave a lecture in the evening. Halifax, Elland and Sowerby Division Labour Colleges held a successful school at Hardcastle Craggs on Sunday, 3rd July, fifty students being present. The lecturers were G. Northcott and H. Highley. The Divisional Week-end School will be held on September 10th and 11th at Heathmount Hall, Ilkley. The lecturers are J. Hamilton, D. Barnett and the Organiser. The cost of the school is 12/6 inclusive. Other particulars may be had from the Organiser. The tutorial training classes in the Division are still going strong. The Organiser takes classes at Hull, Sheffield, Doncaster, Bradford and Todmorden. Comrades Haigh, Nelson and H. Highley take the Leeds and Halifax classes. It is anticipated that four new tutors will be available for the winter session. The Divisional Scholarship to the National Summer School was awarded to Miss Falkingham, and the scholarship to the

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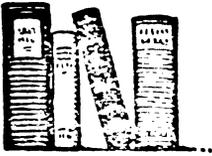
Training Centre to Harry Burney. The Leeds College feels proud at carrying of both scholarships.

Division 8: Our lecturers have been busy in South-East Lancs. Area giving talks on "Trade Unions and The Law." The Annual Area Conference is arranged for August 27th with J. Hamilton in the chair and the address is to be given by Councillor M. F. Titterington, of Bradford, Yorks. We are pleased to welcome the affiliations of the Gorton Branch of the Boilermakers and the Manchester Branch of the Lithographic Printers. The Rawtenstall Tutors' Training Class is still going well and one appreciates the big efforts made and the determination and ability of the students. A local Committee has been formed in Oldham, the Secretary being Mr. A. Bottomley, 126 Burnley Road, Chadderton, Oldham. Mr. Bottomley is a member of N.U.D.A.W. Mr. H. J. Minshall, 95 Morris Green Lane, Bolton, has accepted the position of Secretary to the local (Bolton) N.C.L.C. Committee.

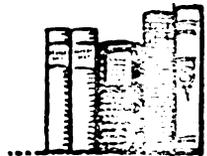
Division 9: No report.

Division 10: Dundee College held a successful Day School on 3rd July. Comrade Gibbons lectured on "What is a Revolutionary Situation?" and on "The Limitations of a General Strike." Edinburgh is arranging week-end schools for the Borders. A. Woodburn lectured at an Ayrshire School. D. J. Williams took a week-end school for Lanarkshire. During the month Mr. J. P. M. Millar met the Lanarkshire Committee on organisational questions. The Mid and East Lothian miners have re-started paying their affiliation fees and the Fife Miners' Amalgamated Union has decided to have a scheme.

Division 11: During the month several Trade Union Branch lectures have been given in Belfast, Newry and Lisburn to the A.E.U., the E.T.U., N.A.F.T.A., and A.U.B.T.W. Branches. The Organiser gave a report on the year's activities to the A.E.U. Divisional Council for Northern Ireland. This was appreciated and should result in the extension of the class work. Preparations are being made for the visit of George Hicks, who is booked to address a public meeting and conference in Belfast in September.



The PLEBS Bookshelf



LANSBURY'S *Weekly* is no more. I may be permitted—though I had a small share in its production—to express some real sorrow at its demise, and even to say that it was emphatically one of the Labour journals one would like to have seen going on and prospering. And that not solely because one was in sympathy with its general policy, or because many good Plebs—including its assistant editor, R. W. Postgate, Ellen Wilkinson, Arthur Woodburn, Jack Hamilton, Ernest Johns, and W.H.—were among its regular contributors; but also because it did do something to break down the stereotyped idea of what a Labour weekly must be.

No movement is more conservative than the Labour movement. Whether it be the order of a meeting, the planning of a campaign, or the make-up of a newspaper—everything must be done on the most respectable traditional lines. The heavy blight of solemnity hangs over too much of our Labour journalism, so that the ordinary man in the street and in the workshop may be forgiven for assuming that we are all Nonconformists. *Lansbury's*, though it had some solemn, and a good deal of serious, stuff in it, did contrive to strike a cheerfuller note than some of its predecessors and contemporaries. And its attempt to look more like a popular weekly and less like a highbrow review was an interesting one.

I've said before on this page, and I shall go on saying it again until somebody does something about it—that what the movement badly needs is a good humorous weekly, with pep in it. There are heaps too many sermons and far too few jokes in our Labour periodical literature. Shaw showed us long ago that laughter could be a deadly weapon. Why doesn't somebody start a Labour *Punch*? We've got the authors and the artists—"Yaffle," "Gadfly," John S. Clarke, "Tomfool," "Flambo," Mattinson, Brill, "Espoir," "Lethan Hill," T.A.J., W.H., and lots of others who'd soon be

on the spot if they were given an opportunity. Everybody who has seen a Summer School revue knows that there's any amount of scope for wit and humour in our propaganda—and any amount of appreciation for it. If any super-taxpayer reads THE PLEBS and chances to see these words, I hereby invite him to earn my undying gratitude by financing a weekly journal as heretofore outlined. There's money in it!

Meantime, to go back to where I started—salutations, on behalf of THE PLEBS, to "G.L." and his co-workers. And may the *New Leader* be as good as the *Weekly* was!

Those Plebs who've taken my advice and got acquainted with H. M. Tomlinson's writings should note that *The Sea and the Jungle* is now published in a satisfying little pocket edition at 3s. 6d. It's more than ten years since we reprinted a page or two from that book in THE PLEBS, and during that period Tomlinson has added some half-dozen volumes to the list under his name in the library catalogues. I'm still hoping that we shall have a cheap edition of *Under the Red Ensign* one day. . . . By the way, Roger Dataller's very interesting articles in the *Miner* on "The Miner in Literature" had a reference to Tomlinson and a little quotation which was sufficient to convince anybody of his quality.

The last novel I've read lately is John Dos Passos' marvellously vivid study of twentieth century city life—*Manhattan Transfer*. Passos wasn't mentioned in V. F. Calverton's article in last month's PLEBS, but I'm not quite sure whether that wasn't due to the fact that the article had to be rather severely cut in order to get it in the space we could spare. Anyway, he's emphatically one of the men that matter. *Manhattan Transfer* is some "social document"—and with a little change of local colour its scene might just as well be London, Glasgow, Paris or Berlin, as New

York. . . Another of the younger American writers who can write as Ernest Hemingway, whose novel *The Sun Also Rises*, has just been published in this country under the title of *Fiesta*. It is a marvellously vivid picture of post-war "civilisation." But if you read it, read it carefully, or you may miss the point of the whole book—as Gerald Gould did when he reviewed it for the *Daily News*. The "I" of the book was wounded in the war; and *how* he was wounded is what matters to the whole story.

As I write, only the first of the series of articles, "From a Workers' Bookshelf," by Wm. West, has appeared in the *Daily Herald*; and that one doesn't get very far in the direction of actual re-

commendations. But I was glad to see that Jerome K. Jerome's fine novel, *Paul Kelver*, came in for special mention. It's a good many years since I read it, but I've a vivid recollection of the impression it made on me. Jerome was by no means the merely comic writer that some of his other books would suggest (though God forbid that I should belittle comic writers). *Paul Kelver* is a book worth owning. J. F. H.

For the "idea" of our cover design this month we are indebted to a Belfast comrade, some of whose excellent attempts at contriving N.C.L.C. posters out of cuttings from various sources were on exhibition during the N.C.L.C. Summer School.



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