

"Every country is now our neighbour," and that is a literal truth which applies equally to Australia. Invention has made physical distance of small account, but there remains a barrier in the shape of ignorance. Ignorance of language is the greatest constituent of this barrier; indeed, it is more than all the rest put together. It leads to all manner of misapprehension and suspicion, and only by its removal can we hope for better understanding.

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WORKERS' EDUCATION

AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE.

"W. G." writes:—Most of the writers on this question in the columns of "The Daily Herald" seem to be incapable of understanding how any one can argue against the Workers' Educational Association unless out of pure cussedness. These good people have never learned the meaning, nor do they realise in the slightest degree, what Marx called the "class war." It is evidently the mission of the W.E.A. to blind the workers to its existence. This is the head and front of the W.E.A.'s offending. Capitalism to-day is really entering upon its final death struggle against the growingly conscious forces of the workers throughout the world. This antagonism is exhibiting itself in three distinct channels—industrial, political, and educational. Already the working class is strongly organised to fight the capitalist class in the region of industry by forming unions, and in that of politics by forming a Labor Party, distinct from all capitalist parties. The working class is just awakening to a knowledge of the fact that it has been leaving in the hands of the capitalist class the most important of all—education. But it is never too late to mend.

The critics of my former letters, including Mr. Victor Cromer himself, unwisely assume that any person who does not attend the W.E.A. tutorial classes must necessarily be entirely ignorant regarding the teaching of that institution. But surely this contention is absurd. We can know the milk-and-water-nature of the teaching of the W.E.A. by reading the reports appearing in the press. Indeed, according to the ethics of that body, it would seem to be a crime to pronounce a favorable opinion upon anything. A correspondent in "The Daily Herald" makes the statement that "it would be an education for W. G. to hear an ardent thinker such as Mr. Heaton discourse on economics." I wish it to be understood that I have no quarrel with Mr. Heaton, who is doubtless endeavoring to do his duty under a difficult set of circumstances over which he has little or no control. But I have no idea of what is meant by an "ardent thinker." I have the notion that a person may have many good qualities and think ardently without ever having grasped the meaning of the class struggle or the economic interpretation of history. What the working class movement wants to-day from education is a definite lead that will aid it in its struggle for emancipation. The education that does not do this, but humbugs the proletariat with beautiful sophisticated platitudes about things in general and nothing in particular is only worse than useless. It is my contention, and I again repeat it here, that the W.E.A. does this deliberately, purposely, and designedly, and not from mere accident. Is this charge true?

The evidence is overwhelming. Let your readers refer to Mr. Heaton's so-called "second" lecture on economics, which appeared in "The Daily Herald" of June 12, in which they will find—(1) Teetotalism, socialism, and coalition governments unceremoniously lumped together as being equivalent economic quantities (that is amounting to the same thing); (2) emphasis is placed upon the assertion that frequently comes from the pulpit, that character more than any economic or political factors determines the conditions of society, wholly ignoring the fact, as demonstrated by Karl Marx, "that the prevailing mode of production and exchange, and the social organisation necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which is built up and from which alone can be explained the political and intellectual history of the period"; (3) socialism (the reader will find) is described by Mr. Herbert Heaton as being in itself "ideal," but the Socialist is a bad fellow; (4) co-operation is also described as "ideal," but awfully susceptible to "fraud." This sort of thing may pass muster with some innocent persons as being "ardent thinking," but it assuredly isn't working-class education.

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NECESSITY FOR SCHOOL ECONOMICS

Speaking with regard to the necessity for establishing a school of economics at the Melbourne University, Professor Harrison Moore said he could imagine nothing more fatal to the success of the teaching of economics at the university, however, than for any governing body, organisation, trade union, or university council to draw up a creed of economic doctrine and say that the university should teach that. It would be impossible, by the establishment of a chair of economics, to bring out demonstrable truths in economics as demonstrable truths in mathematics could be brought out. The subject did not admit of that. But economics could lay bare a situation, show the views that were possible on one side or the other. The result would be that, though people would differ in opinion, at any rate, there would be some differences that would be impossible to them, certain fallacies that neither side could indulge in, and a feeling on the part of all that the conclusion reached was the result of true theory and not of blind bias. Thought ought to have the effect of bringing about a reconciliation of feeling among people who would differ. As a teacher of law, he felt constantly how much they lost through the non-existence of a school of economics. If such a school could not solve all industrial matters he always felt that it might give the abler men among the working classes the opportunity of equipping themselves to become competent managers, and might compel people engaging in commerce to view affairs from different points of view.

AUSTRALIAN BANKS

PROPOSAL FOR NATIONALISATION.

MR. SCOTT REPLIES TO MR. NEILL.

CHALLENGE TO DEBATE.

The man of one idea is a force the world cannot neglect. Frequently his fanaticism, as it is called till he succeeds, is a source of mirth, but his rugged earnestness always rivets the attention and swings opinion to his belief. Earnest as Calvin, determined as Cromwell, and as energetic as Churchill, Mr. J. M. Scott, author of the "Circulating Sovereign," has forced his financial theories on large sections of the population, and is winning others round, albeit slowly. Yesterday he was discovered considering the criticism by Mr. W. Neill, of the Adelaide University, on the unanimous resolution of the Labor Conference in Sydney to nationalise the banking system. Mr. Scott was asked whether he would care to reply.

"Yes," he said, "I will give you an opinion of that criticism. I once read that Bismarck had a poor opinion of university men on anything practical. If university men in Bismarck's time in Germany were anything like our Professor of Economics his opinion was justified. Just let your mind carry back to 1903, and picture the quiet talks being delivered in the unconstituted P.L.L. in Sydney on the question of bank nationalisation. From those addresses grew our Commonwealth Bank, thanks to the Labor organisation. It is not men like Mr. W. Neill who do things. Men in his position opposed the idea of the Commonwealth Bank, and could see nothing in it then. Yet because just a few Laborites grasped the truth that the banking business was the key to the industrial problem, their constructive thoughts resulted in our bank.

—The Great Panacea.—

"That bank has not been put to the use it might have been, and the missionary work had to be done again in the unions.

The P.L.L. has again forced banking before the public for discussion. This time, I think, forced by war problems and the problems of competition in manufactures with our Asiatic Allies, the business men of Australia will take hold of Labor's proposal of democratising the banks with both hands. In that proposal is the solution of our wage problem, the white Australia problem, and, I might say, of the British Empire problem. Let us democratise finance. Let us take national control of the circulation of our Commonwealth notes, for that is it in a nutshell, and we shall open the door to the new civilisation. War forced into existence the Bank of England, and that bank was the foundation of modern commerce. Had it not been for opposition from a certain quarter in 1694, the Bank of England at that time would have been used to its fullest and we should not have had a wage problem to-day.

—An Old Problem Recurs.—

Time has rolled on, and we are in a similar position to 1694. The key is to move forward with finance. Take over all the banks, use their power for democracy, and we shall have captured that which has so long controlled us. Finance rules the life of everyone of us; it rules each country separately; it rules the world. Finance is merely the system to which money is handed. Control the system and the human race will be free. For instance, since 1694 we have been doing work and have been handling money in such a way that we have been in debt for the work we did. In Australia we have been using our own money, and have been persuaded that we were borrowing from England. It all seems impossible, does it not? It really has been Australian money from Australia's gold mines which has kept England afloat, and such is the awful horror of the private-owned banking system that we had first to pawn everybody to someone in England who certainly did not own anything here. After doing that we began to use or to circulate some of our own savings banks money.

—A Glaring Example.—

“Take a glaring example of the position. We Australians printed our Com-

monwealth bank notes. we needed the use of money, and said there was none in Australia. Norton Griffith said—‘Pawn New South Wales to us, and you may use some of your own bank notes.’ That was done. Now you can see what the proposition means—when it is stated that to carry on public

works without loans we will take over all the banks—the Commonwealth banking combine. Then, when we decided to carry out a public work, men will do so and each pay day will receive, as now-a-days, our own money. It is the same old money, you know. The work when finished is national property, free of debt, of course.

—A Simple Proposition.—

"Perhaps Mr. W. Neill's university mind cannot grasp a simple business proposition like this, but that does not matter. The only things these university experts know on economics are what they read in some book, or what somebody else told them. Mr. Neill has stated that he could not see that taking control of the banks would influence the nationalisation of the means of production and distribution. If Mr. Neill cannot see that his lectures to business men would be reduced in value. Put the following proposition to any man accustomed to handle money, let his mind grasp the position for a few seconds, and he will say—'Yes; give me control of the banks; give me control of the centre into which the gold mines empty their production; give me control of that centre to which all money flows, and you will have placed in my hands power over everything. I shall be able to buy out any industry I needed or to crush it if it will not sell. I shall be able to divert men's energy into any line of action. I shall be able to put men to build factories and to produce goods in those factories, and if I give them the goods for nothing, so long as I retain the bank, I shall not be bank-

rupt. The money is the power.'

—The Source of Finance.—

"Mr. Neill is also reported to have denied the fact that it was the industrial classes' wealth which finances all our public works. Well, as a member of the Labor organisation, and with some experience which Mr. Neill does not possess, I tell him that if he made that statement after investigating the balance-sheets of the Australian banks, he does not understand such documents. All the money in those 22 trading banks is the property of our savings banks. The capitalist class does not own one coin or note in Australia—the whole of it is the property of the industrial class. It is only natural that as soon as this fact became public the owners of the money would begin to push for control of its circulation, and the only way to obtain that is to take control in the manner suggested in the proposal submitted by Mr. Burden, of Darlinghurst P.L.L."

Mr Scott was asked whether he would be willing to meet Mr. Neill in a debate on the question. "Yes; I just should," was the reply. "There must come a time when some representative from the wage-earning class will step out to meet the champion of this out-of-date finance and the sooner the better for all classes. This finance superstition must be exposed, and if Mr. Neill will come on to the platform to debate the question he will be doing a great and a public good."

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LEON GELLERT.

POET AND SOLDIER.

In unusual circumstances, when thoughts are rich with new experiences, the literary mind ever seeks expression. In whatever the accustomed medium—poetry or prose—such thoughts must be reflected. Thus on pieces of paper, soiled and odd leaves, taken into the trenches, Leon Gellert wrote many of the poems included in his book, "Songs of a Campaign." Put into print on clean, white sheets, they carry to all who read them pictures of that life lived in ditches of death, dug hastily in foreign soil—pictures limned at the moment of inspiration. Burets of a sabbell; fall of comrade; burial of splendid youth—these are the songs of a campaign to-day. The young poet sings not of "war's rich livery," but tells his mind in phrases that breathe the psychology of things when man seeks to kill man and engines destroy life.

Mr. Gellert is a poet whose song has found maturity in war. "Gallipoli," he says. "Yes; there was much to write of there." He wrote as he knew how to



Leon Gellert.

write. His pen had not sought to express itself in prose. When only nine years old he pieced together his first literary efforts. "I wouldn't like to see now the things I wrote then," he remarks. He was writing verse before his sixteenth birthday, and continued to write now and then as a hobby, and with no definite aim. Some early works were printed in the daily press. "I kept on writing when I was at the front," he told the interviewer. "Just for something to do at odd moments—to express my thoughts. When I collected the verses to submit them to the University in connection with the Bunday prize I had to discard some of them—some that seemed too morbid. When I came back and read them over I saw that there was plenty of room for improvement, but they were written in moments when I felt like writing, and for this reason I did not alter them. They are published as they were written, in camp, in the trenches, and in hospital." One of the most compelling of his little poems was composed while he was an invalid at Malta. "Patience," he calls it:—

Red! Red! Red!

Is there no black?

Red like the bloody earth this pack!

Knaves! Kings! Queens!—all red!

Where are the black?

Shuffle again!

Will not the other cards come back?

The only cards to clear the brain!

Dear God! 'twill crack!

Shuffle again!

Red! Red! Red!

Black! Black! Black!

Is there no red?

Has all the blood on earth been shed?

Each Queen! Each King! And every Jack!

Where are the red?

Shuffle again!

Was blood within the world all shed?

The millions mourning for the dead?

The million dead

shuffle again!

Black! Black! Black!

It came to him as he played patience, struggling with the cards that first came out all red, and then all black. While war runs through most of his lines, the outlook is not always warlike. There are delightful musings as he gazes through a port-hole:—

If you could see the silver moon shining on the deep,
You'd say the world was not unkind, but just a sleeping child.
You'd say the world had gone to sleep,
And while it slept
It smiled.