

Arise Ye Cheated Bureaucrats

By Earl R. Browder

THE labor movement is, in the estimation of many of our "labor leaders" and loyal Gompersites, a convenient means to furnish these estimable gentlemen with a rich and easy living. Of class ideals such men have few or none; all they seek is their individual welfare; they want money and power for themselves. To achieve this end they stick at nothing. Hence the shameful graft and fabulous salaries which have made scores of them into wealthy capitalists. Hence, also, the desperate resistance they offer to all progressive movements which tend to disturb the status quo, and thus to threaten their sinecures. The one thing that holds back the progress of the working class more than anything else is the unbridled egotism of our labor officials.

This is an old and familiar story. Everyone acquainted with the labor movement knows how disastrously such leadership works out for the masses of Labor. It is less realized, however, that the American labor bureaucracy is so extremely stupid, and so ruinously selfish, that it completely overreaches itself and defeats its own ends. Even from the standpoint of the egoistic officialdom itself, and without considering the interests of the rank and file of Labor, the current conservative labor policies are stupidly shortsighted.

"Safe and Sane" Leadership

Our conservative leaders pride themselves upon being "practical" men. They are sane and conservative. They are smugly sure that they are right. They play the game safe, and take no chances. No newfangled progressive notions for them. So as they go along these self-seeking officials take all they can get. Their mottoes are: "All the traffic will bear" and "After us, the deluge". Thus, with their ultra-practical policies and "sane" leadership, they bleed the movement white, kill all progress within, and throw it helpless before the militant capitalist class.

Now what these "practical" leaders fail to see is that in ruining Organized Labor they have ruined their own prospects for continued easy living as well. Fat salaries can continue only from a strong labor movement. But instead of working out an intelligent policy which would produce a great, powerful movement, capable of furnishing countless rich official plums, their stupid and shortsighted selfishness has produced but a scrawny, half-starved organization, which

can support a bureaucracy only a fraction as large and potent as it might be. Thus has our Labor officialdom defeated its own sweetest hopes. These bureaucrats are penny wise and pound foolish. Their greed has overwhelmed them. They are killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. They are cheated egoists.

Potential Political Plums Passed Up

If a young millionaire should squander his estate as recklessly as the labor leaders squander their potential assets, he would be adjudged a spendthrift, and a conservator appointed to care for his property. The conservative bureaucrats calmly sell out a billion-dollars worth of working-class political power for a few thousands, and think they are being eminently practical. Without bringing the interests of rank and file into the argument at all, the reactionaries have shown that they need a guardian, because they don't even know their own interests. Consider, for example, the aspect of things political. There the bureaucracy, in following out Mr. Gompers' policy, which is the quintessence of the selfish system that has ruined Labor, have made a pretty mess of it, and have lost out heavily.

The vast complexity of machinery that goes to make up the local, state, and national branches of our Government furnishes tens of thousands of well-paid political jobs. There are almost countless numbers of senators, congressmen, state representatives, councilmen, sheriffs, judges, and what not. And with these political offices goes immeasurable patronage and power. It is a prospect of plums and sinecures to make the mouths of ambitious bureaucrats water at the thought. In an industrial country like ours, at least half of these rich jobs could be at the disposal of Organized Labor—that is, provided it had the intelligence to organize in a separate party and go out to win them. There would then be fat jobs galore to pass around freely among the aspiring brothers.

But consider the pitiful reality. Because the trade union leadership has lacked the good sense to organize a labor party it has robbed itself of all these rich political plums. There is hardly a labor man in office anywhere. In the great city of Chicago, for example, there is not one labor man in the city council, nor has there been for years. With intelligent political action, three-fourths of the city Government, which means hundreds of good jobs, would be in the hands

of the labor leaders. What a terrible loss to our bureaucracy! And it has been brought about by this extreme greed and "practicality". The bureaucrats have turned a deaf ear when, in the past, the radicals proposed that a labor party be started. They were too "sensible". They would not "waste their votes" on the long task of building their own party. They would get quick results; they would hop into office by supporting their political friends and opposing their enemies; they would harvest without sowing. Today we see the result of their short-sighted greed. They have virtually cut their own throats. They are pitifully impotent in politics and thousands of political sinecures that would have been in their hands, had they gone into independent political action, now rest in the control of others. Ponder for a moment this situation, you Gompers' bureaucrats, and realize how worthless even to yourself is the much-vaunted "practical" political policy of your intellectual leader.

Wrecking the Source of Supplies

On the industrial field the situation is about the same—the self-seeking bureaucrats in their eagerness to exploit the unions to the limit through extravagant salaries, overloading them with incompetents, refusing to allow them to amalgamate, and all the other characteristics of reactionary leadership, have checked and stifled the organizations, and brought them to ruin. A case in point is the railroad shopmen. At the A. F. of L. Railway Employees' Department Convention their leaders, for fear some of them would lose their jobs, opposed the general railroad amalgamation which alone could have forestalled or won the threatening strike. Result;

the unions have been practically wiped out on many systems, and a hundred times as many officials lost their jobs as would have done so through amalgamation. The shopmen officials would not sacrifice a sprat to catch a whale. Consequently they not only missed the whale, but they lost their sprats as well.

Similar examples of reactionary leadership and shortsighted greed, piled by thousands upon one another in the course of the years, have restricted our labor movement to a struggling organization of only 3,000,000 members, instead of the 25,000,000 members that an intelligent policy would have given it. Of course, this has meant overwhelming disaster for the workers. but the bureaucracy has not escaped scot free either. Think of the thousands upon thousands of good trade union official jobs that would be at its disposal were the great industries organized. But Gompersism, with all the sterility and incompetence which that implies, has kept them disorganized. What a loss for potential office holders! Only a few have been able to get the gravy.

Gompersism is dragging the labor movement to ruin. The rank and file are waking up to this fact, as is witnessed by the great amalgamation movement. But the officialdom of the labor unions still blindly follows the old reactionary, oblivious of the fact that even their own selfish interests are jeopardized by the resultant wreckage. Some day, perhaps, a spark of intelligence and revolt may pierce the skull of a labor union bureaucrat, and he may lead a crusade against Gompersism in the interests of the job holders. Some day—but the revolution will occur long before such a miracle could happen.

A Letter from Tom Mann

Durban, Natal, So. Africa,
November 30, 1922.

My Dear Friend:—

I left England for South Africa in middle of September, just as we learned of your arrest, but I was not able to get a clear understanding as to whether you were detained or not. I hope you are at liberty and at work. I came here at the request of the miners who have been through a most trying time. Three hundred are still in prison awaiting trial. They have been in nine months already; special courts, no juries, are trying the cases; four hanged already; many others will probably be sentenced to death. A wickedly

brutal business. I do not know when I shall finish here, probably in March, and I am invited to visit Australia and may do so. Later this would be a good place for you to pay a visit to; you would be well received. I wonder how the R. I. L. U. Congress is going on; it should be in session now, I think. The week I left London for South Africa, John Burns was leaving for Russia. I met him casually and he had his passport. I write mainly to send New Year's greetings to all. My memoirs are in the printer's hands and will be out in a few months.

Fraternally yours,

TOM MANN.