

## More Class Collaboration Bunk

By Earl R. Browder

**L**ATEST recruits to the advocates of collaboration of the working class with capitalism, according to the scheme of Wm. H. Johnston of the Machinists' Union, are the erstwhile Intercollegiate Socialists, now the "industrial democrats," who publish an organ called *Labor Age*. The group consists of well-intentioned, educated, and more or less religious, young men and women from the middle class who are quite determined, come what may, that Labor shall be elevated, made "self-respecting," given some "control," and generally brought up to their own high level of culture.

It would be ungenerous not to preface a cold-blooded examination of the objective functions of such groups as that gathered about the *Labor Age* with an appreciation of their good intentions. They mean well. They are overflowing with love for their oppressed fellow-men. They are bursting with desire to help the world out of a bad fix. Many of them are admirable persons, generous to a fault, keenly intelligent within specialized fields, and withal quite pleasing folk with whom to spend an idle hour or to recommend a deed of personal kindness.

Unfortunately, however, the actual life of the world runs along upon another plane entirely from that inhabited by this middle-class intelligentsia. With the result that, entering into practical affairs of the labor movement, these advocates of "industrial democracy" become tools of the most sinister influences at work within the trade unions of America today. This is glaringly illustrated in the *Labor Age* for March, which is devoted to eulogizing Johnston's scheme for turning the unions over to the bosses, daubing it over with the pink paint of "workers' participation in management," to make it more attractive, or to use another metaphor, coating the poisonous pill of class collaboration with sugary arguments of "industrial democracy." The result upon those immature minds unable to pierce through to reality is complete confusion, delivering them helpless before the agents of capitalism, the official bureaucracy of the trade unions.

### Enemies of Amalgamation

Amalgamation of our ridiculously divided craft unions into strong industrial organizations is a basic necessity for the labor movement. The class-collaboration movement is the deadly enemy of amalgamation. *Labor Age*, supposedly favorable to amalgamation even though it is but a few months since it printed "Amalgamation" on its

cover in the form of a big question mark, indicating serious doubt of the matter, itself carries the evidence of hostility to amalgamation on the part of the collaboration scheme. In an article by O. S. Beyer, technical high-priest of the movement, we find the contemptuous expression: "The new policy of cooperation . . . automatically brings with it the remedy for these conditions which your railroad amalgamationists maintain can only be realized when everything has been soundly 'amalgamated' — whatever that may mean. . . ."

This is not an isolated instance; it sounds the key to the entire collaboration propaganda. Every trade union official working among the railroad and metal trades unions for the adoption of Johnston's scheme is at the same time working night and day to choke out the growing demand for amalgamation of the unions along industrial lines. Always when the workers demand stronger organization, more militant policies, more power for the working class—the answer is being made in terms of the collaboration scheme: "Forget about amalgamation, whatever that is; get to work cooperating with the bosses, eliminating wastes, boosting profits, and then the boss will fix you up without a struggle."

It is the classical Gompers policy with a new dress. It is the repudiation of unionism, of the class struggle. Not by accident was the official blessing of Gompers' family of Labor Grand Dukes given to it at Portland last year, while the other outstanding event was the expulsion of Bill Dunne because he, as a Communist, castigated the spineless servility of the officialdom to the capitalist class. The whole scheme of collaboration with the capitalists involves struggle against the militant rank and file. When the A. F. of L. officially declared for such collaboration, it was but the logical next step to declare war against the militants and throw Dunne out. When Johnston inaugurated the B. & O. plan, he laid the basis for the campaign of expulsions he is now beginning in the Machinists' Union against the advocates of amalgamation.

### The "Workers' Control" Camouflage

Not only is the Johnston scheme in deadly hostility to amalgamation; it is also death to such unionism as we now have. Under the false coloring of "workers' control," even the weak craft unions are being tied hand and foot, are being rendered incapable of any effective action to protect the workers. The union machinery is

being turned entirely into an organ for helping the bosses to make greater profits: better wages and working conditions are to come "as the good results of the idea are shown," which is to say, that when the railroads have cashed in a few billions of dollars extra profit, they may, if they see fit, kindly drop a few hundred thousand to the faithful servants.

"If Labor hopes to get control of industry, it must learn how to conduct management as a group. This gives the opportunity." Thus does *Labor Age* crushingly answer the communist criticism of collaboration. Yes, Labor must learn to manage industry, but how? Your answer, dear "democratic" children, does not answer. Because you have twisted the problem exactly hind-end-to, you have headed yourself straight into the capitalist camp.

The only correct statement of the problem of workers' control is: "If Labor hopes to learn how to conduct management as a group, it must get control of industry." The way to learn management is to manage: to manage presupposes first control: the only way to control is to build up strong and powerful industrial unions closely united with a powerful and militant political organization. The pitiful "control" the collaborationists propose works in the opposite direction, eating the heart out of unionism.

### Corrupting the Progressives

It would be hardly worth while to give special attention to *Labor Age*, the arguments of which are mostly echoes of the official propaganda, but for the article therein by E. J. Lever. Brother Lever is a progressive who, in the past, has stood staunchly for amalgamation. Now he has swallowed the collaboration bait, but is busy trying to reconcile it with a "militant program" and with amalgamation. Beyer has aroused Lever's "creative instinct," with the result that capitalist control is forgotten; Lever is already dreaming that he works under a proletarian system where the problem is no longer one of struggle against the capitalist class, but of building up the industries by the workers.

There is no doubt that the engineer Beyer would be a very valuable man for the railroad workers—where they were actually in control of the railroads, for instance in Russia. But the "socialist" union politician Beyer is a very corrupting influence for the railroad workers in America where the workers are only taking the first feeble steps toward power. Corruption is the only word that describes a process that transforms Brother Lever, militant progressive and advocate of amalgamation, into apologist for the poisonous collaboration scheme of Wm. H. Johnston.

Do you know, Brother Lever, that the Fascist movement in Italy began to come to power at the moment when the Italian unions gave up militant struggle for a promise of "factory committees" whereby they should learn "the technique and management of industry?" Where are the Italian workers today? The German unions gave up the revolution for the *Arbeitsgemeinschaften* (equivalent of the Johnston scheme, on a vaster scale), but today their unions are destroyed and even the *Arbeitsgemeinschaften* are taken away. More than a year ago the German workers had become so disillusioned that they voted, over the opposition of the entire officialdom, to withdraw from participation in the class collaboration scheme. These were Social-Democratic workmen, not Communists. And do you not know, Brother Lever, that in addition to the usual capitalist influences in our unions today, there is also developing a definite Fascist tendency among the higher officials? You should know these things, and you should also know that by endorsing the Johnston scheme you are indirectly supporting every influence in American trade unionism that would destroy our organizations as the Italian and German trade unions are being destroyed.

### Running Away From the Fight

The masses of union members in the railroad and metal industries, where the collaboration schemes are being pushed, are just beginning to take stock after terrible defeats in struggle against the bosses. They are tired and discouraged. They are sick of the old tactics and leadership that brought disaster, and they demand a change. Progressives and revolutionaries have been receiving great audiences, explaining the program of amalgamation, industrial unionism, militant leadership, political action through a Labor Party, and all the measures that alone can lead forward from defeat toward victory. More than half the membership of the railroad unions have demanded amalgamation as the result of this great campaign.

But the officials are sabotaging amalgamation. They are cleverly endeavoring to turn the weariness and disillusionment of the masses into the channels of class collaboration. They sing the siren songs of "industrial peace," under a scheme where the workers will get all they want without fighting for it. Of course the workers do not want to fight if they can obtain their demands otherwise. And a few of them, even such intelligent men as Brother Lever, fall under the influence of the collaboration opium. They run away from the fight, not realizing that they are preparing for themselves, and for the whole labor movement, a struggle a thousand times more bitter when the working class finally awakens to find itself betrayed and helpless in the hands of the capitalists.