

# Labor and Efficiency - Engineers

By W. Z. FOSTER

**W**ITH the rise of American imperialism and the development of mass production on a gigantic scale the employers have launched a whole series of movements and propaganda designed to demoralize the workers and to draw them into ever faster production. They call this "getting the workers' consent" to their speed-up program. F. W. Taylor, in his book, "The Principles of Scientific Management", laid the theoretical basis for this movement by pointing out that it is not enough for the employers to develop new machinery and technical processes; they must also, if they can, inveigle the workers into accepting these speed-up methods and operating them freely.

From this need of the employers originate all the variegated forms of company unionism, welfare work, group insurance, old age pensions, "educational work" housing schemes, profit-sharing, sanitary improvements, employee-stock-buying, etc., etc. These institutions are designed to pacify the workers, to prevent organization among them, to make them think they have a common interest with the employers, and to lure them into the mass production program of the employers. They are beggarly, illusory, crumbs thrown to the workers to halt them from fighting for the solid achievements to be gained through organized class industrial and political action.

## THEORETICIANS OF MASS PRODUCTION

In developing this capitalistic fake reform movement, which is an adjunct of the employers' mass production program, there has grown up an extensive school of capitalist engineers, economists, and efficiency experts who, to disarm the workers and to draw them into still more intense exploitation, are putting forth many impossible theories, some of them, in words at least, even contemplating the abolition of capitalism.

Until now we have paid far too little attention to this capitalistic theorizing.

Professor Tugwell of Columbia University, in his book, "Industry's Coming of Age", preaches the false doctrine of capitalism gradually perfecting itself and of private ownership of industry slowly falling into disrepute and

eventually automatically disappearing. Professor Carver of Harvard wrote his book, "The Present Economic Revolution in the United States" to convince the workers of the impossibility that they can, by saving their dimes and investing them in industrial stock, soon buy control of the industries. Professor Veblen, in his book, "The Engineers and the Price System", puts forward the bizarre theory that the capitalist engineers will eventually work out a system of society in which private ownership of industry will be no more. Gillette, the safety razor manufacturer, purposes glibly that the people shall buy control of the stock in one industry after another and join them together into a "People's Corporation" which shall eventually become the cooperative commonwealth. Jett Lauck and Otto Beyer, economists and efficiency engineers, propound insidious systems of "industrial democracy" under capitalism through company-unionized trade unions, which co-operate with the employers to speed up production. Many others follow similar lines of fallacious theorizing.

## CAPITALIST EFFICIENCY "SOCIALISM"

This "radical" theorizing, together with the company union, welfare, and similar movements, constitutes a system of capitalist fake reformism, a pseudo-Socialism, which I have dubbed "Capitalist Efficiency Socialism". It is a twin brother of the force program of the employers, the direct smashing of unions, driving of workers by wage cut, and economic terrorism, etc. It is an instrument of the open shop drive. Its aim is to liquidate the trade unions and workers' political organization, to destroy the class ideology of the workers, to convince them that capitalism offers them the way to their emancipation, to render the workers helpless before an ever-increasing exploitation. It is a menace to the labor movement.

## THE SURRENDERS OF THE LABOR LEADERS

The conservative trade union leaders, Socialists as well as Gompersites, always tools of the bosses, have surrendered still more completely in the face of this speed up program of the employers. They have given up all semblance of a fighting program for the unions. They do nothing

ing to consolidate the unions, nothing to organize the broad masses of the unorganized. They are accepting the whole mass production program of the employers, with all its trimmings of company unionism, welfare work, "industrial democracy", etc.

The time was when these institutions of the employers to demoralize the workers were actively combatted even by our reactionary labor leaders. But no more. This opposition has practically ceased. Welfare work, profit sharing, and the like are being rapidly accepted by the union leaders. They now make no head-on collision with the company unionism, but instead propose to company unionize the trade unions. With their labor banking and other forms of trade union capitalism they have become ardent advocates of employee stock-buying. They have gone over completely into the service of the two capitalist parties. They are abandoning the strike in theory and practice. They have succumbed to compulsory arbitration—as witness the Watson-Parker railroad law and the proposed national anti-strike law now being sponsored by the American Bar Association and the A. F. of L. They have become servile lickspittles to American imperialism in all its phases at home and abroad.

An especially dangerous aspect of the surrender of the union leaders to the employers is the so-called "new wage policy" of the A. F. of L. This "Union-management cooperation" scheme, worked out by Beyer and other efficiency engineers, is nothing more or less than an arrangement between the labor leaders and the employers to drive the workers into still more intensified production. It is a capitulation to the speed-up program of the capitalists. It undermines the trade unions and degenerates them into mere appendages of the employers' producing mechanism.

When Taylor first outlined his system of scientific management the trade unions, even many of the leaders as well, correctly resisted its driving methods being put into effect at the expense of the workers. But now our corrupt union leaders are the most enthusiastic advocates of industrial efficiency at the workers' expense. They have accepted the capitalist efficiency engineers as the ideological leaders of the labor movement. The trade union journals are full of the vamping of this gentry about the "blessings" of cooperation between workers and capitalists. The labor movement is in the hands of the workers' enemies.

The rejection of a fighting program by the trade union leaders and their acceptance of the industrial efficiency theories and practices of the capitalist engineers has brought the trade union movement to the deepest crisis in its history. With practically a free hand, the employers, supported by all the Government organs of repression, are smashing and devitalizing the trade unions. The breakdown of the Miners' Union is the latest example of their union wrecking. The open shop movement gains ever greater momentum. In the growing industrial depression the employers intensify their drive against the unions and wage standards of the workers. The trade union movement is actually in danger of being destroyed.

It is a situation requiring drastic action by the workers. In order to maintain living standards and to save the trade unions the masses must be mobilized to change the retreat of the unions into a counter-offensive against the employers. But to do this the power of the reactionary bureaucracy must be broken, the policy of cooperating with the employers to speed up production must be abandoned, the domination of the capitalist engineers and their mass production theories over the labor unions must be liquidated. The no-strike, no-struggle policy must be given up, and be replaced by a program of class struggle, of aggressive action against the employers.

Before the workers stand a whole series of elementary tasks necessary to save and rebuild the labor movement. Among these are the basic problems of organizing the unorganized masses either into the existing unions or new organization, the amalgamation and democratization of the trade unions, and the formation of a labor party. These fundamental measures are necessary not only for the eventual building of a powerful labor movement but they are also indispensable to preserve the very life of our existing trade unions.

The present leaders, with their capitalistic industrial efficiency program, are leading the trade unions straight to destruction. The Trade Union Education program of militant action points the way to the construction of a powerful workers' movement, industrial and political, an organization capable of defending the workers' interests now and of ultimately abolishing capitalism.