

# What is Collaboration of Classes?

By Earl R. Browder

It is a fact to be noted with pleasure, that Dr Scott Nearing has been writing and speaking publicly in opposition to the present well-defined movement for class collaboration of the official labor movement in America. Comrade Nearing has accepted the Communist criticism of the "B. & O. Plan," of labor banking (so-called), and of the collaborationist "workers' education" of the Workers' Education Bureau. He has given clear expression to this in recent articles in the labor press, in his speeches before the Workers' Education Bureau conference in Philadelphia, and in a recent debate with J. B. Hardman (Salutsky) in "Advance," organ of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America.

Every new recruit to the struggle against the poisonous philosophy of class collaboration is welcome in the ranks of the left wing. Particularly is this true of such an influential figure as Comrade Nearing. Because there are large numbers of workers who listen with respect to what he says, Nearing's words will help in the gigantic task of mobilizing the workers for the class struggle, and against their misleaders.

It is necessary, however, in the interests of clarity, that note also be taken of the incompleteness of Nearing's thought on the subject, because he leaves a loophole for the reactionaries which they eagerly seize upon and of which they make much capital.

## Where Nearing is Correct.

To the degree that Nearing has followed the Communist criticism of the modern schemes of class collaboration his statements are correct. For example, the following paragraph from his article on "Labor Banking," is correct, and lays a foundation upon which could be built the complete indictment of collaboration:

During the years of the steel strike, of the injunction against the miners, and of the initial stages of the open shop drive (1919-1920) American labor faced a difficult crisis, and labor leaders had to make a definite decision. One road led toward industrial conflict and the other toward the entrance of labor into business. The "labor executives" decided that it was better to lead organizations into the banking business than to fight. "We cannot fight against the Government," said Lewis, and so he became the president of the Indianapolis Labor Bank.

This is sound criticism. It contains the elements of the Communist position. It examines a specific historical situation. It states the relation of the class forces. It shows the entrance of the "labor executives" into business as a flight away from class struggle, as an alternative to fighting the class enemy, as a shifting of the economic basis of the labor officialdom from the dues payments of the membership to the dividends and favors of business and business connections.

## Where Nearing Gets Off the Track.

Unfortunately Nearing does not remain upon this solid ground. He proceeds to generalize in a fashion that "gives

aid and comfort to the enemy," the class collaborationist. The concluding paragraph in his article on "Labor Banking," says:

Perhaps it is not the business of the A. F. of L. to fight—perhaps it is their business to go into labor banking. If that is the case, American workers must build a fighting organization on the economic field. There are two functions here. One is the function of the co-operative, to build around the present order, to get investments and keep them; the other is a definite struggle to take over the machinery of society in the interests of the working class, to destroy the system on which investment is based.

Here Comrade Nearing has gotten completely off the track of sound thought which he had laid in the paragraph quoted before.

Passing over the theoretical confusion, which identifies wealth possessed by working class organizations upon a co-operative basis with that wealth possessed by the capitalist class and used as means of exploitation, there are several wrong practical conclusions drawn in the last quotation, which surrender vital positions to the collaborationist.

What are these wrong conclusions of Nearing? Here are a few.

1. There is a fundamental conflict between satisfaction of the immediate needs of the workers, through co-operatives, and carrying on the class struggle for the ultimate interests of the working class.

2. "Perhaps" it is the function of the trade unions to enter the field of co-operative effort, but if so then the American workers must build themselves new "fighting" organizations on the economic field.

3. We must surrender the field of practical work to the advocates of class collaboration, for co-operatives of any sort are essentially committed to the established order.

## All of These Conclusions are Wrong.

Comrade Nearing is completely wrong on all these points. While he is combating class collaboration he has, in these conclusions, surrendered the field to our enemies. For these conclusions are essentially the arguments of the class collaborationists themselves, only re-stated from another angle. The exact opposite is true in each case.

Point 1. There is no fundamental conflict between the satisfaction of the immediate needs of the working class, and fighting for the revolutionary interests of the workers, for the overthrow of capitalism. In fact, the one is impossible without the other. Whether it be trade unions, co-operatives, political parties, or what-not, working class organizations cannot fulfill their functions (increase the power and well-being of their membership) unless their daily activities are carried out on the basis of the class struggle. If they are based upon class collaboration, they immediately and inevitably betray the immediate interests of the workers and become instruments of the capitalist class to demoralize and destroy the working class organizations.

Point 2. All talk about abandoning the trade unions, because of their class collaboration policies, in favor of "new fighting unions" to be created by the fiat of the class-conscious workers, is the kind of bunk that helps discourage the militant workers and gets nowhere. Without any "perhaps," it is an important task of the labor movement to build co-operatives (separate from the trade unions, but in close alliance) and to fight within the co-operatives, the trade unions, and every other working class organization equally against dualism and class collaboration.

Point 3. If there is one thing that we cannot do, it is to abandon the field of practical everyday needs of the workers to advocates of class collaboration. Class collaboration is wrong not only because it compromises the final aims of the working class, but also because it betrays the workers in their daily tasks.

## A Handservant of Hillman Speaks.

J. B. S. Hardman (Salutsky) takes advantage of the gap in the logic of Nearing to build up a case for his superior officers in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, who are among the most enthusiastic advocates and practitioners of class collaboration. In the "Advance," official organ of the A. C. W., for May 8th, a discussion between the two is printed.

It would probably be no hazardous guess that Nearing's article would not have been printed but for the opportunity it gave Hardman to deliver a few blows for Hillman. Neither mentions the fact that Hillman, collaborating with the clothing manufacturers of Chicago, in 1924, put across a general reduction in earnings of Chicago clothing workers under a camouflage of "readjustments." The fact that the independent economic base given Hillman by his "labor bank" helps him get away with such stunts is a part of the discussion overlooked by them.

Nearing's article is a brief review of the last twelve months, which he calls "Another Lost Year." It is a concise statement of:

Another year of losses for the American workers—losses in numbers; losses in spirit; losses in economic power; losses in blind-alley politics; losses through the growing solidarity and concentrating economic power of the owning class; another lost year during which the American workers found out, in several directions, how not to do things.

Nearing ends his article, after showing how all these losses were due to the policy of class collaboration, with the plea:

There is but one way out for the American worker—economic and social organizations, based on the slogan: "All power to the producers." Short of such classconscious understanding, battles on both the economic and political fields will be lost by the workers before they are fought.

Hardman, in classical Hillman style, says he agrees with all this but. . .

## Hardman Wants Capitalism to be Tolerable.

In the course of the article last quoted, Nearing writes a sentence which may be interpreted as containing the errors dealt with at length a few paragraphs before this. He

speaks of "co-operative housing and other schemes that aimed at making the established order tolerable." Hardman pounces upon this sentence with great glee.

"See," is the meaning of his article answering Nearing, "all these people who talk against labor banks and class collaboration, they want to make conditions worse and worse for the working class in hopes of goading them to rebellion. They would sacrifice the interests of the workers to their doctrinaire ideas of revolution. We, on the other hand, with our labor banks, co-operative housing, etc., are making the world better for the workers, and let the revolution take care of itself."

If Nearing gives the impression of a very honest and sincere man doing his best to untangle the knotty problems of the labor movement, the same thing cannot be said of Hardman. Nothing that has been said here in criticism of Nearing's views can be used to justify the tricky arguments of Hardman, a man who used to call himself a Communist and, under the name Salutsky, was a member of the first C. E. C. of the Workers Party. Nearing's whole argument was that policies of class collaboration were responsible for the defeats of the past year. Hardman picks upon Nearing's error in divorcing the immediate from the revolutionary tasks of the workers in order to prove—that while class collaboration may be bad in the abstract, every concrete example of it is good.

## What is Class Collaboration?

In order the better to defend class collaboration in the concrete (that is, to defend the practices of the officialdom of which he is a part), Hardman is willing to admit that, in the abstract, class collaboration is a very bad thing. And then in order to be perfectly safe in condemning class collaboration he gives it a definition. He says: "If representatives of labor in their dealings with the representatives of the employing and owning class, do not stand up for what is of value to the class they represent, if they take a middle position, a wishy-wishy stand on matters of importance, instead of fighting for labor, these representatives of labor are guilty of class collaboration."

Splendid, is it not? There is only one trouble with it. It would be accepted by every advocate of class collaboration in the world as a catalog of things to be condemned, but not one would admit that it condemns his particular method of class collaboration.

Nearing hits upon the real key, when he points to the statement of Green, president of the A. F. of L., that the time for counsel and compromise had arrived in the relations of capital and labor, under the slogan of "a mutuality of interests in industry." All practice based upon this idea is class collaboration. It leads to these other things which Hardman enumerates, and many others also. Hillman, Hardman's boss, believes in that principle and expresses it publicly. It is the guiding principle behind every labor bank, the B. & O. Plan, co-operative housing, etc. It is the root of Hillman's "readjustment" scheme in Chicago last year. It is back of his arrangements with the New York clothing manufacturers. It is destroying the power of the needle trades workers and demoralizing their living standards. But Hardman, under cover of his definition, can say: "Yes, we are against class collaboration. But we must be practical. And

to be practical, we must have labor banks, Hillman policies, etc.

Collaboration of classes is the practice that arises from the theory that the working class and the capitalist class have some common interests that enable them to work peacefully together to the benefit of both. This practice turns out to be, in reality, the surrender of the working class to the capitalist class, and its deliverance to the tender mercies of its enemy. It finds its institutional expression in the B. & O. Plan, labor banks in the present form, the Civic Federation, etc.

Hardman is a former Communist who is turning his talents toward helping confuse the workers as to what is the theory and practice of class collaboration, one who has become the handservant of reaction.

Nearing is a former liberal who is painfully fighting his way toward the position of Communism, of the relentless struggle of the working class for the overthrow of capitalism, but who has not worked out as yet all the implications of his position.

Class-conscious workers will know how to refute the sophistries of Hardman, accept the co-operation of Nearing and help to correct his errors, and continue to rally ever larger masses of the American working class for revolutionary struggle and against the vicious practices of class collaboration in the trade unions of this country.

## Poems by Jim Waters

### "CANNED"

To hell with you!  
You ain't the whole earth,  
Not by a damn sight!

You sneak around shaking your fat paunch shouting:  
"I'm losing money . . . hurry-up . . . pull-out . . .  
"Step-on-it!" . . . and you "can" anybody that talks back.  
I've seen your kind before—always losing money—  
Riding in limousines, showing off on the golf links,  
And talking open shop at the Union Club.  
On Sunday you go to church and tell everybody  
What a nice employer you are . . .  
On Monday you go blue in the face cursing your men.  
You can't bull-doze me!

To hell with you!  
You ain't the whole earth,  
Not by a damn sight!

### SPRING POEM

SPRING is here  
And the first rays of the sun  
Slip fingers of warmth into the fetid slums;  
The miasmal ooze of streets and alleys  
Fills the nostrils with nauseous odors  
That are vibrant with the music  
Of thunderous church bells;  
The tenements spew forth a flood of humanity,  
Awkwardly dressed and solemn, that slips

Through the ducts of palatial churches;  
At Fifth and Canal street,  
The Rt., Reverend Percy Larder Livewell  
Moves his hungry worshippers to tears  
By pronouncing benedictions on the worthy,  
And distorting his fat face in a caricature  
Of the suffering and livid Christ.

O, spring is here,  
And the miasmal ooze of streets and alleys  
Fills the nostrils with nauseous odors.

### PUBLIC SQUARE (Cleveland, Ohio)

COME sit in my lap, and welcome,  
You ragged sons of toil, you vagrant,  
You prostitute, you drunk, you beggar;  
I see more in you than objects for scorn:  
You are red prayers, symbols of a new Dawn.

Come mount this rostrum, you radical;  
Hurl your biting words of castigation  
Into the sensitive flesh of smug plutocracy;  
Fill the souls of these despised shards  
With the rhythmic beat of revolt;  
Your protesting voice means more to me  
Than the labored rhetoric of politicians.

Come, gather here in welcome, my children,  
For I am the Mother-heart of this city  
Whose breast is aching with expectation.



Sylvester Jerreux

# Since Eastman Lied

By C. M. Roebuck

A Review of "Since Lenin Died"

MAX EASTMAN, lately a member of the Workers (Communist) Party of America, has just written a book nominally defending Trotsky, but actually attacking the majority of the Russian Communist Party and the leaders of the Communist International. He has chosen to publish it in the midst of a new wave of world reaction, which began several months ago, and just at the moment when the capitalist press in every country is doing its level best with slanders and forgeries, in order to shake the stubborn faith of the workers that the Workers' and Peasants' Government of Russia is their own government. Max Eastman does his little bit to assist in this press barrage which is intended to preface a military attack on the Soviets.

It is a little difficult to make out what Max Eastman thinks is the real trouble between Trotsky and the rest of the Russian Communists. Eastman does not make it easier for us by a very confused style, cross-references, repetitions, etc. But by dint of patience, we are able to find out, at any rate, what Max Eastman thinks (a) of the leaders of the Russian Communist Party, (b) of the most active members—officials, delegates, etc.—of that Party, (c) of the Party as a whole.

#### Max Eastman on the Communist Leaders.

On the national leaders—Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin, Rykov, Bukharin, etc. "The machine" (p. 33). "The heads of the bureaucracy" (p. 35). "Their speeches and articles . . . would be thrown out of a prize essay contest in a school for defective children" (p. 51). "The bureaucratic methods employed in the Party . . . presided over by Stalin, were the source of his power" (p. 59). "The performance at this convention (the XIIIth) was a continuation of the deliberately unscrupulous campaign carried on during the winter" (p. 98). "Nobody can tell how much Trotsky's sickness played into the hands of his enemies. It is certain that

COMRADE ROEBUCK, of the Communist Party of Great Britain, refers in this review to "Max Eastman, lately a member of the Workers (Communist) Party of America." This is a misunderstanding. For a brief space Eastman was a member of the Party but he never participated in Party work and he long since allowed even his platonic membership to lapse. Eastman belongs to Greenwich Village, not to the working-class movement.

During his travels through Europe Eastman contributed articles to "Asia," "The Nation" and other bourgeois publications, for which no doubt he was richly remunerated, but he did not feel called upon to write for the labor press. As for the WORKERS MONTHLY, we received a letter from him to the effect that we might reprint one of his articles from "The Nation." We did not avail ourselves of the opportunity.

A few days ago we heard from Eastman after a long silence. His letter, which was sent as an answer to Comrade Bittelman's article ("Max Eastman on Leninism"), is a scurrilous attack on the Russian Communist Party and a paen of praise for Trotsky—the kind of praise from which Trotsky is now trying so vigorously to disassociate himself. A day later came a cablegram signed by Eastman, reading: "Hold Story for Second Letter." So Eastman has written us again. No doubt. No doubt he has read Trotsky's statements repudiating him and is worried.

The book, "Since Lenin Died," was published by Eastman in England. A comprehensive article on Eastman and his writings will appear in the July issue of the WORKERS MONTHLY.

they consciously reckoned upon it in starting this unscrupulous campaign" (p. 96). "Abstract dogmatists" (p. 105). "The triumvirate are content to hold power in Russia—and that upon a fiscal foundation devised by the gars (sale of vodka)—while satisfying their revolutionary dispositions and professional habits with abstract-agitational gesticulations in the International" (pp. 112-113), "A group of abstract agitators" (p. 118). "The use of the secret police by the Party bureaucracy for spying on its own membership . . . because the daily and accepted method of destroying Trotsky" (p. 120).

This is how Max Eastman writes about the leaders of the Russian Communist Party and the Communist International—the men on whom the Russian workers and peasants rely for that leadership which has proved the despair of Poincare and Curzon, Ramsay MacDonald and Mussolini, J. H. Thomas and Hugo Stinnes.

What does he say about the Party officials? The 3,000 Party secretaries, com-

mitteemen, etc., of the Leningrad district are "manipulated like automatons," "obedient officials," "bound up to the perpetuation of the bureaucratic regime," "called together and whipped into an intellectual panic by Stalin and Zinoviev," "Zinoviev party workers" (pp. 62-71). On the Thirteenth Party Congress of 1924, the supreme authority of the Russian Party, Eastman writes: "It was undoubtedly one of the most perfectly 'packed' conventions ever held in the history of the world" (p. 85). "All day long, one obedient delegate after another . . . stepped up and made his little superficial contribution . . . to the business of confirming and perpetuating the false paper caricatures of Trotsky which they had learned by heart" (p. 87). "Their performance reminded me of nothing so much as the Armistice Day exercises in a patriotic American private school" (p. 90). Later on (p. 99) he describes the Party officials as "a bureaucratic aristocracy solidifying within the party," "a dictator-