

# Agrippa Was a Liar

by Robert Minor

**A** MAN I have known a long time asks:

"What is the difference between the position of the Communist Political Association, saying that capital and labor can get along together, and the class collaboration that the old Socialist opportunists and Samuel Gompers used to advocate? We used to accuse them of being guided by the philosophy of Menenius Agrippa, the Roman senator, who tried to stop the revolt of the plebeians against the aristocrats in ancient Rome by telling them the yarn about the human body. Agrippa said it was really too bad that the arms and the legs had to do all the work, while the good things of life all go to the stomach; but there was nothing that could be done about it, the arms and legs must not rebel against the stomach because they cannot get along without the stomach. Are we not doing the same thing when we tell the workers that they must get along with capitalists?"



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**NO.** QUITE a different thing. The effect is quite the opposite.

Why was that old analogy between the human body and human society so harmful?

First, because it was entirely false, because concretely there is no resemblance. To prove any truth in it they would have to show that putting food into the stomach of a wealthy person strengthens the arms and legs of an exploited man, that the wealth of the exploiters brings prosperity to the exploited. Such is not the case. That is why the analogy is false, deceitful, fraudulent.

Secondly, such an analogy or philosophy that resembles it was harmful because people could be made to believe it.

At the time when Gompers and the Socialist opportunists told the masses they could not get along without the exploiting classes, it

stified their initiative, stultified their thinking by making them accept an untrue, monstrous picture of the structure of society. It caused a weakening of democracy and retarded the building of the labor movement.

**BUT** today not a single average human being in the world believes that the workers cannot get along without the exploiting classes. The possibility of making any seriously large mass of people believe that they cannot get along without an exploiting class above them has disappeared forever from history.

It is exactly because of this that a great deal more of freedom of action and discussion in the field of relationship between capital and labor is possible.

We are not telling the masses the opportunist lie. We tell them the truth, of the character of this war as a national war, the true interest of the nation in the defeat of fascism, and the vast stimulation and strengthening of all of world democracy by the strength of the great socialist state and of our alliance with it.

Observe what a different effect it has under conditions of this time when we tell the masses that it is to their interest to enter wholeheartedly, fully and in good faith into the support not only of the national cause in the war, but also of a long-time cooperation of the different classes, and particularly the two decisive classes—capital and labor. It is now a matter of influencing the course of national policy, and this is a reality, no longer an illusion. It is a matter of worldwide common action to bring peace "for many generations," and for world cooperation between nations through which we will be able to bring a great expansion of markets throughout the world, a stability and solvency of democratic states, rising standards of living and therefore the continuation in peacetime of the same order of magnitude in our production which we have reached in time of war.

The effect is not stagnation, not inaction, not weakening of the labor movement, not an atti-

tude of dependence and fear, but of mass confidence on the part of the labor movement and all other people's organizations. It fires the minds and hearts of hundreds of millions all over the world with the consciousness that they are now in a position to give conscious direction to their destiny. In spite of the fact that it has some superficial resemblance, what would have been and was, under the old conditions, an influence towards suppression of initiative and of thought and hope, of the people, today leads to enlarging the horizon of the masses, giving them assurance, causing them to build more powerful unions, to move ahead with confidence in their role of influencing history. It is true that there is the common element of "getting along with the capitalists." But in this case it is a voluntary policy of getting along with the capitalists, adopted by the masses at this time, at least in our country and many other important countries, do not feel the necessity or believe in the advisability of adopting in their countries a socialist system. What is before them and what they understand and are convinced that they should carry through, is the policy of giving a tremendous new push forward in the material and spiritual welfare of the peoples of all nations through the cooperation of countries, including the socialist state of Russia, the enormous nations of China and India, the peoples of Latin America, etc.

It is a mistake for people to think that other classes, aside from the workers and the colonial peoples, do not also understand a great deal of this. For them it would be absolutely suicidal to proceed in any way that does not provide the national welfare and full employment. The people now know such national well-being can be achieved in any event, and this strengthens the enormous collective effort of the democratic peoples of the world to achieve these things through the Teheran policy.

My friend forgot that there are opportunists today, also, or he would have seen that all of these opportunists are on the opposite side.