

The A. F. of L. and Trade Union Unity

By Wm. F. Dunne and Wm. Z. Foster

THE drive for unity of the world trade union movement launched by the Red International of Labor Unions has produced two major responses.

First the rapprochement between the British Trade Union delegation and the All-Russian trade unions.

Second, and rivalling it in international importance, the manifest tendency of the American Federation of Labor bureaucracy to affiliate with the Amsterdam International, or rather to absorb the Amsterdam International, and thereby to become the labor agency of the House of Morgan in Europe.

No revolutionist can observe what took place at the recent convention of the American Federation of Labor at El Paso, at which Grassman, representing the German trade unions was present, without being convinced that just as American finance capital is now supreme in Western Europe, so does the American labor bureaucracy, carrying out the instructions of its imperialist masters, intend to strive for leadership of the Amsterdam International.

American imperialism will insist on this as an additional guarantee of no resistance from the trade unions to the enforcement of the Dawes Plan.

The El Paso convention proved that the drive on the Communists culminating in the unseating William F. Dunne at the Portland convention a year ago was no mere outburst of bureaucratic injured vanity but part of an agreement with American imperialism whose full implications were made plain at El Paso.

The American Federation of Labor bureaucrats follow the American flag and act as policemen for American imperialism in every country in which it operates. El Paso showed the bureaucrats in feverish activity directed towards two objectives:

1. The participation of the Mexican labor movement and its delivery to American imperialism.
2. The establishment of the American Federation of Labor as the auxiliary of the Dawes Plan in Europe.

We can lay this down as a major premise:

The entry of American finance-capital into the world arena explains the re-entry of the A. F. of L. into the international labor movement.

Let us trace briefly the actions of the A. F. of L. in the last decade.

The withdrawal of the A. F. of L. from the Amsterdam International was timed to coincide with the period of "neutrality" of American finance-capital and government. The failure of Wilson to secure endorsement for the League of Nations was followed by the isolation of the A. F. of L. from direct participation in the affairs of the international reformist organizations but in America it carried on a policy of militant hostility to Soviet Russia.

With large sections of the Amsterdam International showing evidences of friendship for the Red International of Labor Unions and Soviet Russia in spite of the Dawes plan, with unity of the world trade union movement becoming more probable every day, and with this phenomenon show-

ing increasing signs of being the most dangerous opposition to the counter-revolutionary offensive of the American imperialists, with characteristic disregard for disguise always shown by the American ruling class when its power is threatened.

The A. F. of L. bureaucrats at El Paso were forced to throw aside all pretense and come out openly as the labor wing of imperialism. During the year that has elapsed since Portland, the labor bureaucracy has conducted an intensive campaign against the Communist Party in the United States and at the same time has extended its activity to the semi-colonial areas exploited by American capital—Canada, Mexico, Guatemala, Santo Domingo and Porto Rico. It has laid a base in all these countries for further aggression by American imperialism.

In Canada, the efficiency engineer employed by the bureaucrats of the Machinists' Union, conducted an investigation of working conditions on the Canadian National Railways—owned by the Canadian government—and succeeded in having the government adopt the infamous Baltimore and Ohio plan—the class collaboration scheme that makes of the unions mere efficiency organizations operating in the interest of the capitalists.

In Mexico, the emissaries of the American Federation of Labor, cooperating with the agents of American finance-capital, threatened the officials of the Mexican Federation of Labor with the withdrawal of support unless the "labor" government of Mexico and the Mexican labor movement, adopted the A. F. of L. policy towards the Communists and met the terms of the American bankers. These agents of American imperialism were successful. The officials of the Mexican Federation of Labor forgot all their previous denunciations of American imperialism and the blood shed in the dozens of counter-revolutionary massacres engineered by American capital.

They adopted the anti-revolutionary and anti-Communist policy of the A. F. of L. and, forgetting that the Mexican Communists were the first to mobilize against the counter-revolutionary de la Huerta in the last counter-revolution, Trevino, secretary of the Mexican Federation of Labor and tool of Gompers and Morones, its president, caused to be passed the following clause of a resolution:

"The Mexican Federation of Labor does not permit, and will not permit, the establishment in Mexico of Communist Parties dependent upon and directed by the Third International of Moscow."

The Mexican delegation then proceeded to El Paso and its surrender to American imperialism was greeted by Matthew Woll, heir apparent to the throne of Gompers, in the following words in an interview given to the Daily News of Chicago:

"The outstanding feature of the convention was the close co-operation developed between the labor movements of the United States, Mexico and Canada. Closer relations of the THREE GOVERNMENTS and peoples is bound to follow. INDEED I FORESEE A MONROE DOCTRINE OF LABOR. By that I mean united resist-

ance against attempts by FOREIGN CAPITAL or FOREIGN LABOR to get a foothold either in concessions, property or economic principles or aspirations."

The El Paso convention endorsed military training camps, the resolution of the American Legion (the organization of ex-army officers) asking for universal military service, it asked for representation in the war department and it demanded more battleships and endorsed the world court and League of Nations.

Of these policies Woll said:

"We did not lose sight of practicalities in approving these instruments of international concord. Organized labor declared for every measure of self-defense and for the defense of our people and institutions. We approved the training of the youth of the land to develop the body and mind and the spirit of patriotism."

The rejection of independent working class political action was hailed by Woll as "a repudiation of the thought that American wage-earners desire to institute a class government."

The American Federation of labor delegates were the guests of the Mexican government at the inauguration of President Calles and there was complete accord between the Gompers clique and the yellow socialists who swarm in and around his cabinet like flies around a dung-pile. This amity is due to the fact that the Calles government has capitulated in the most abject manner to the American bankers and because the Obregon government—its predecessor—had severed relations with the British government—the most powerful rival in Mexico of American imperialism.

"The Monroe Doctrine of labor" as voiced by the A. F. of L. bureaucracy means therefore that the A. F. of L. will fight exploitation of Latin-American workers—by any other force than American imperialism.

Mexico was attached to the chariot of American imperialism at El Paso. Let us see what was done to further the Dawes plan in Germany.

Every capitalist press correspondent at El Paso struck the same note relative to the conferences that were held between the Amsterdam leaders present and the Gompers clique. The correspondent of the Daily Worker—the organ of the Workers Communist Party of America—is also in agreement that at these conferences arrangements were made to absorb the Amsterdam International but the capitalist press disguises this by labelling it "a new world trade union organization."

The outstanding fact is that Grassman and the other Amsterdam spokesmen agreed to meet the terms of the A. F. of L. bureaucracy.

An exception must be made in this case of Swales, fraternal delegate to the A. F. of L. who defended the Russian unions and the Soviet government in public speeches. How far he will go in organizational resistance is problematical.

The Amsterdam representatives, in the words of the Daily Worker correspondent, "frankly admit willingness to drop objectionable features if Gompers will join the organization." The death of Gompers since the adjournment of the convention will not alter these conditions which are:

1. The prevention of trade union unity.
2. Full support of all phases of the Dawes Plan.



DELEGATES OF THE AGRARIAN LEAGUE OF COMMUNES OF THE STATE OF VERA CRUZ, MEXICO, AT THE SECOND CONGRESS NOVEMBER 28 TO DECEMBER 3, 1924, WHO VOTED FOR AFFILIATION TO RED PEASANTS INTERNATIONAL

3. A relentless drive against Communists in all labor organizations.

That the right wing of Amsterdam will agree to these conditions with the same enthusiasm that it has advocated submission to American capital as in Germany is obvious. It needs the financial support of the American Federation of Labor, a support that will be of a substantial nature in view of the subsidy that will be forthcoming to the American labor bureaucrats in the event of the successful consummation of the gigantic scheme of betrayal of the world's working class—a subsidy that the House of Morgan will charge to "operating expense."

This maneuver of the labor wing of American imperialism is the best proof that the Profintern drive for unity has shaken the trade union tools of reaction as nothing else has. They see that they cannot combat a unity slogan merely with propaganda so they become outright advocates of imperialism in all its blackest forms of suppression and in this they play directly into the hands of the Red Labor International and the Communist International.

When the American Federation of Labor bureaucracy makes the capture of the Amsterdam International the central point of its policy we can see that the unity program has made great inroads among the masses.

The unity of the imperialist powers against labor in spite of their endless rivalries in other fields, is becoming more apparent to the masses every day. So widespread is this offensive of imperialism, that even the capitalist press is forced to record its aggressions.

In Spain, Italy, France, Germany, Bulgaria, Finland, Estonia and England, wherever the House of Morgan and the Bank of England have investments the struggle of the workers becomes more and more a struggle against international capital. The mass murders of Communists and sympathizing workers by the capitalist governments are recorded gleefully by the capitalist press of all the world.

Germany and France in particular are investment areas of the House of Morgan and the fact that the German Social Democracy hails the recent elections as "a victory for the Dawes Plan" is not lost upon the masses of workers and poor farmers.

In a word, the pressure of world capitalism brings home to the workers as never before the necessity for world unity of the organs of struggle of the workers—the trade unions. There is no argument that can be raised against it and these lackeys of imperialism—the Amsterdam leaders and the A. F. of L. bureaucrats—will attempt to foist upon the workers who want unity, an imperialist substitute—the unity of the reactionary A. F. of L. and the imperialist lackeys of the Amsterdam right wing.

What effect will this unity of the Gompers clique with the Grassmans, Hendersons, Thomases, Dittmans and Jouhaux have on the Red Labor International drive for unity of the organized masses?

First of all, we believe that even this unity of enemies of unity will work to the advantages of the revolutionary elements. There is something about a slogan of unity of all workers against the bosses that captures the imagination of the masses and it is so apparent that the unity of the right wing is unity for the bosses that it will redound to the credit of the left wing and its slogan of struggle.

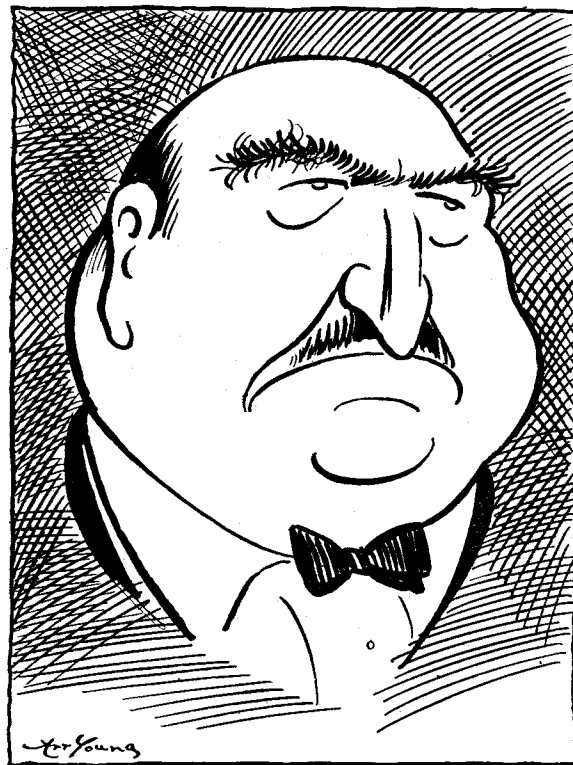
In America the exposure of the Gompers clique as the

labor instrument of American imperialism attracts ever wider masses to the Trade Union Educational League. Imperialism lives by violent suppression as well by propaganda and very soon the A. F. of L. bureaucrats must appear as the open advocates of military suppression of the masses they have already betrayed. In Europe, the support of the Dawes Plan by the right wing of Amsterdam furnishes the best ammunition against it.

The "unity" program of the A. F. of L. bureaucracy and the right wing of Amsterdam is really a spitting policy—a continuation of the policy of war on the left wing, the expulsions of its adherents from the trade unions and the consequent weakening of the labor movement. In the United States there is a united front of the yellow socialists, the A. F. of L. bureaucracy and the capitalists against the Communist-led—left wing.

This war on the left wing has weakened the American trade union movement to an extent that is little understood outside of America. At the El Paso convention, after a three year boom in industry, the Gompers clique had again to record, as it recorded in Portland, a decrease in membership. Class collaboration has disgusted hundreds of thousands of workers who, not very well informed as to the class nature of the struggle, are nevertheless in accord with a militant program and as a consequence of this there appears in industry a new group—workers who were once organized

ONE WHO MOURNS GOMPERS



It may be difficult to find some one as good and there is always the danger of getting some one more radical.—David R. Forgan, vice chairman National Bank of the Republic, Chicago, Dec. 13, 1924.

but who have left the unions—who refuse to pay dues to the bureaucrats.

The policy of class collaboration in industry has ended logically in the endorsement of the imperialist schemes of the House of Morgan and the United States government. Side by side with this betrayal and opposing it militantly is a new revival of fighting spirit in the unions.

In the machinists, the carpenters, the steel workers, the left wing slates and programs have received large votes, in some instances a majority altho the candidates were counted out by the machine. In the United Mine Workers of America, under Communist leadership, there is a nationwide revolt expressing itself in strikes of thousands of miners because of violations of agreements and constant treacheries of the bureaucrats.

At the convention of the Pan-American Federation of Labor (a paper organization consisting of the A. F. of L. bureaucrats, the traitorous officials of the Mexican labor movement, Guatemala and Santo Domingo—there was opposition from these two oppressed nations) the following manifesto was issued and consternation among the bureaucrats was paralleled by the enthusiasm of the masses of workers who are instinctively against American imperialism:

TO THE DELEGATES:

Gompers is the instrument of Yankee imperialism in the labor movement.

He sabotaged the protest of the Third Congress against the occupation of Santo Domingo.

He sanctioned the occupation of Haiti (See the American Federationist for March, 1924.)

He proposed to the United States government that it pay less wages by 25 or 35 per cent, to the Latin-Americans in the Panama Canal zone, than to the workers from the United States.

In spite of the repeated resolutions of the Pan-American Federation, Gompers has done nothing for the Mexican immigrants, inhumanly exploited in the United States.

He opposes any fight whatsoever against Yankee imperialism, a fight that must be the object of continental solidarity and of the Pan-American Federation.

He opposes socialism, and he says so frankly.

He opposes the yearly protest of the First of May, because it is "revolutionary."

He breaks strikes declared in solidarity, and in general he breaks them because they endanger capitalism.

He sabotages strikes in the great industries (steel, railroads, etc.) for the same reason.

He opposes the entrance of the workers of North America into politics as a class, not because he is an anarchist, but because he wants them to remain within the capitalist parties.

In the congress, the Mexican delegates, now under his control, as proved by the convention at the city of Juarez, say that Gompers is the friend of the working class of Mexico, by having "helped Calles and Obregon against De La Huerta." Do not be deceived. Always Gompers follows in Mexico the policy of the United States government. He did not help De La Huerta because the National City Bank, Morgan, Rockefeller and Hughes (his masters) helped Obregon.

Yankee imperialists helped Obregon because British capital helped De La Huerta; because Obregon had conceded the



THE MESSIAH

J. de Miskey

nullification of Article 27 of the constitution by "recognizing" that it was not retroactive, having signed the Lamont-De La Huerta treaty and made other concessions. In Mexico, as in all Latin-America, Gompers does as Morgan dictates.

Gompers must not be re-elected president of the Pan-American Federation.

The Pan-American Federation must convert itself into an instrument of struggle against Yankee imperialism.

The workers of Latin-America and those of the United States demand it.

The Mexican Committee of the Red International, The Trade Union Educational League of the U. S. A. The Pan-American Anti-Imperialist League.

The closest possible ties unite the revolutionary trade union movements of Mexico and the United States. The manifesto of the Communists and revolutionary unionists has had the widest circulation in the Latin-American countries. There is a real resistance to American imperialism in process of organization and the fact that the offensive against the Communists was the major activity of all three conventions is proof of the strength of the movement.

The program of the American section of the R. I. L. U. provides for war against reaction in every avenue of its activity. The bureaucrats have quit fighting for even the daily needs of the workers and their open espousal of the imperialist aims of the ruling class, coupled with the work of the revolutionists, divorces more and more of the masses

from them. The shop council program of the left wing is gaining supporters every day in the basic industries.

The El Paso convention was the last thing needed to complete the left-wing indictment of the Gompers clique and it will be utilized to the utmost. The betrayal of the Mexican labor movement, the preparation for the enforcement of the Dawes Plan, the endorsement of the domestic military policies of the American imperialism, the rejection of independent workingclass political action, coupled with the hostility to the Japanese workingclass in line with the rivalry of American and Japanese imperialism, shows the A. F. of L. bureaucracy as the foremost defender of world reaction.

To sum up:

The A. F. of L. will re-enter the international labor movement because American finance-capital has become the slave master of the European workingclass.

The A. F. of L. forces its counter-revolutionary policy upon the colonial labor movements whose governments and economies are in the field of American exploitation.

The American Federation of Labor will insist that every labor movement which it absorbs—including the Amsterdam International—shall wage war on the Communists and prevent the consummation of the unity of the world trade un-

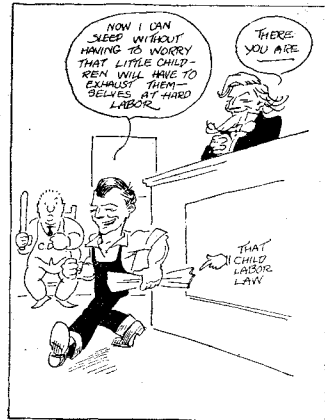
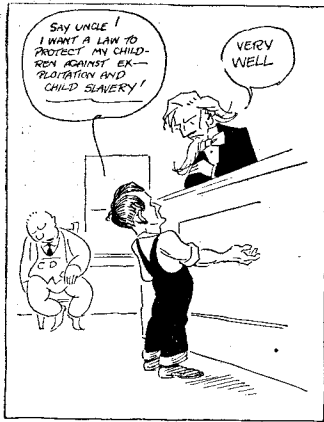
ion movement except under the black auspices of American imperialism. The American Federation of Labor will insist that every labor movement over which it establishes its hegemony as the labor outpost of American imperialism, shall wage war on Soviet Russia.

The death of Gompers will make the task of imperialistic domination of the colonial and European labor movements more difficult but his successors will attempt to carry out his policy.

Those skeptics who doubted the wisdom and practicality of the unity drive of the Red Labor International must now admit that it has brought a clear alignment of forces in the labor movement and that the reactionaries have, in their submission to the A. F. of L. and the Dawes Plan, furnished living proof of the charge preferred by the R. I. L. U.—the charge that Gompers, Grassman, Jouhaux, Henderson and Thomas are cut from the same piece of cloth—the imperialist weave with which world capitalism tries to strangle the world revolution.

The A. F. of L. bureaucracy thus appears as the leader of a counter-revolutionary "unity" drive.

Against the unity from below of the organized masses with the left-wing—the program of the Red International of Labor Unions—the A. F. of L. raises the slogan of unity of the right wing—unity for and under the auspices of American imperialism.



“Revolution Comes”

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