

WORKERS AGE

A PAPER DEFENDING THE INTERESTS OF WORKERS AND FARMERS

Vol. V., No. 2.

NEW YORK, N. Y., SATURDAY, JANUARY 11, 1936.

Five Cents

A LETTER TO THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

The following excerpts are part of a longer letter sent by Heinrich Brandler and Jay Lovestone in the name of the November Conference of the International Communist Opposition to the Executive Committee of the Communist International. No reply has been received to this document sent on November 9, 1935.

The complete letter will be published in the "INTERNATIONAL CLASS STRUGGLE" (English Edition) for January-March 1936. This is the official quarterly of the International Communist Opposition and will appear in printed form about the middle of January.—Editor.

THE UNITED FRONT AND ITS LIMITS

As to the united front, the resolution correctly states that the united front movement "is still in its infancy". It goes on to say that, to date, in France "the first advances of fascism have been defeated." This takes the ground from under the illusion that "the road to French fascism has been closed." The resolution lacks an adequate concrete analysis of the very serious shortcomings and errors of the French united front movement. This analysis is all the more necessary since the French exper-

ience has been put up as the international model at the Congress.

The resolution states that the united front "is the most important immediate task of the international labor movement in the present historical epoch." We welcome the strong emphasis on the necessity of turning to the reformist organizations. This is especially urgent in view of six years of ultra-leftism and the "united front from below." But the resolution lacks a simultaneous emphasis of the limits and the objective of the united front movement. The Seventh Congress gives directives not only for

the next few months but for a longer period. Therefore, the resolution should have stated expressly and unequivocally that the winning of political power by the working class is not possible thru the united front movement. The seizure of political power presupposes that the Communist party is already the leader of the majority of the working class, i.e., the leader of the working class for an armed uprising, a civil war, and not only for partial and immediate demands as in the united front struggle. To be silent on this, for fear of repelling a temporary ally, will lead to opportunist deviations and to a possible collapse of the strong united front movement. The failure to uncover the limits of the united front movement weakens the correct appeal of the resolutions "not to give up independent work of Communist education, organization, and mobilization of the masses." A true united front movement is not weakened but strengthened thru a clarification of its limits.

United front tactics can only serve as the means for ushering in the struggle for the seizure of power. The united front movement is indispensable for this purpose. To grasp clearly the limits of the united front movement is the prerequisite for the proper organization, as demanded in the resolution. "of elected (or in the countries under fascist dictatorship selected from the most authoritative participants in the movement) non-partisan class organs of the united front in the factories, among the unemployed, in the workers' districts, among the small townfolk and in the villages." Only when these non-partisan broad class organs of the united front are conceived of as the preliminary stages of the future political soviets can the united front movement build the organs for an extra-parliamentary struggle for partial de-

mands. Without these organs, serious successful partial struggles are impossible. The experiences had in these broad non-partisan united front organs during the struggle for partial demands from the starting point for the transformation of these organs for partial demands into political councils (soviets)—into organs for the struggle for political power.

THE UNITED FRONT vs. PEOPLE'S FRONT GOVERNMENT

Such an error of omission is particularly evident in the resolution in the paragraph on the united front or People's Front Government. "If with such an upsurge of the mass movement it will prove possible and necessary in the interests of the proletariat to create a proletarian united front government or an anti-fascist People's Front government, which is not yet a government of the proletarian dictatorship, but one which undertakes to put

into effect decisive measures against fascism and reaction, the Communist party must see to it that such a government is formed."

It is conceivable that in the course of a mighty united front movement based on strong non-partisan united front organs the question of the government is put before it—before the Communists have a majority in the non-partisan class organs of the united front. Under such circumstances the attitude of the Communists toward the formation of a government is decisive for the winning over for communism of the masses organized in the united front movement. A situation may arise when such an experiment is necessary in order to eliminate the very last democratic illusions of the workers. In this sense, Lenin proposed to the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries in September 1917 to dissolve the coalition with the bourgeois parties, especially with the Cadets, and to take

(Continued on Page 3)

Strengthen Courage of German Communists; Swell \$5,000 Fund

By Jay Lovestone

Dear Comrades and Friends:

Our appeal last week was not in vain. Some of you answered right away and right well. We are encouraged.

But good beginnings don't necessarily insure a fine finish. We have a long road to hoe. Every day, every hour reveals the burning urgency of our task. To show that we are not crying "wolf", we talk to you—straight from the heart. We hope you will answer straight from the shoulder.

In this morning's mail our weekly report from underground Germany brings such saddening news as to cause us deep anguish, painful concern. Here it is:

"Comrade Scheler-Titus was sentenced by the Supreme Court of Jena to 14 years prison for alleged membership in the Communist Party of Germany (Opposition) and underground activity on behalf of the CPO. In addition, he has been deprived of all citizenship rights for 15 years and is subject to police supervision for the rest of his life. This verdict is so unspeakably unjust that it must call forth mass protest. This case proves once again that Fascist justice is indescribably brutal.

"The trials that occurred this year in Thuringia are characteristic. Comrade F. Giessner (Gera) was sentenced to 3 years prison, a few months ago. Later on, Comrade W. Kopp (Greiz), Martin (Weimar) and Krukel (Jena) were sentenced to 8, 10 and 12 years respective-

ly. All comrades were accused and convicted of underground work on behalf of the CPG-O.

"It is rather significant that the German press designed for abroad did not publish a single word about these trials. It is, therefore, all the more necessary for the workers of other countries to come to the aid of their brothers in Hitler Germany and to register their protest against Hitler savagery."

Now, what is your answer? How soon are you going to answer it? And what are you going to do about it?

No Nazi bestiality can break the spirit of our embattled, courageous comrades in the Hitler inferno. But failure on our part, on your part, to stand by them, to help them, to show real, practical, prompt response and solidarity can and will hurt our common cause beyond measure.

This is plain talk, unvarnished by emotion, undisturbed by the ghastly terror of the Hitler hordes. We know, and you know, that we can all count on the unstinted devotion, the inestimable self-sacrifice of the revolutionary proletarian heroes of the Third Reich.

Now—can our death-braving comrades over there count on us, on you over here? Only we, only you can answer this decisive question. In advance we say: OF COURSE, all of us, all of you will respond to the vital need of those tragic, yet inspiring, hours. Poor.

as we may be, unsatisfactory as your present conditions in the U. S. may be and are, still, we are extremely fortunate in comparison with our German comrades and friends. More than that. We are fortunate to be able to help, to do our bit at so little cost—at no risk, free from such gruesome trials and tribulations.

You: We want you to come across speedily and handsomely.
You: Will give today because
You want to aid, because
You are stirred to help, because
You are glad and proud to assist.
Helping hands—mighty fists—into the Fascist dungeons!

Shed no tears. Spare no cash. Give and give—until it hurts the Hitler hooligans and frees the world's bravest men and women.

OVER THE TOP! BOOST THE \$5,000 DRIVE. THE TIME IS SHORT. THE NEED IS GREAT.

New York Militant Socialists Set Up New State Organization

The New York members, in revolt against the Old Guard, met on December 28, 29 to constitute themselves as the official state party and to lay plans for organization. The credentials committee reported 93 delegates from various cities throughout New York State. New York City had a representation of 41 official delegates while about 8 delegates from upstate locals were there merely as observers. The up-state delegations were markedly different in their composition being proletarian and unemployed, and in their attitudes mostly antagonistic to the Old Guard because of the latter's neglect and disregard. They showed a greater lack of political maturity than did the New York City delegates who at least were revolting to a degree against the Old Guard politics and methods of organization.

The convention opened with a key note speech by Jack Altman. He recited the many grievances against the Old Guard politicians especially hitting the attempted "reorganization" of the New York City branches which would have amounted to virtual disfranchisement of a good section of the local New York party. Altman's speech was followed by various short reports of delegates from different locals, attending the convention. The great majority of these speeches were marked by complete absence of political analysis. The unstaters were mostly concerned about their neglect by the Old State organization to which they attributed the blame for their lack of growth

and steady disintegration. A notable exception was the speech of Brickner (Buffalo) which bristled with invective and revolutionary indignation against the Old Guard.

The convention went on to elect its resolutions and organization committee. The delegates accepted the two (!!) resolutions presented by the former committee. One resolution endorsed the Socialist Call and the other declared that "we assume the responsibility of an emergency of the S.P. of New York and proceed to elect a representative State Committee and take such further action as may be necessary to save the party in New York and we instruct the State Committee to appear before the N.E.C. at its next meeting to claim recognition as the state committee of New York." All other resolutions were referred to the State Committee especially the four RPPA mimeographed resolutions. Political issues were deliberately avoided by this procedure.

During the course of the convention, Sam Friedman spoke for the "centrists" or "Acting Action Committee for the Committee on Unity". His plea for unity or for another "harmony" pact was met with almost unanimous disapproval. The most revealing aspect of Friedman's speech was the reading of a telegram from Dan Hoan. The latter stated his agreement with the "Centrists" moves for "harmony". It was also rumored that Hoan had expressed much

(Continued on Page 4)

REVIEW OF THE WEEK

SOCIALIST EXECUTIVE RESCINDS N. Y. CHARTER; F. D. BEGINS CAMPAIGN FOR REELECTION; FRAME UP CAR WORKERS IN OMAHA; SHOE STRIKE ON IN HAVERHILL

Socialist Executive Takes Charter from "Old Guard" But Militants Face New Investigations

THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE of the Socialist Party, meeting in Philadelphia last Saturday and Sunday, lifted the charter from the New York "Old Guard" Socialists after a bitter struggle. The decision culminated in the resignation from the committee of James Oneal, spokesman of the "Old Guard". However this cannot be considered as a victory for the Militants since not only was the recently set up Militant State Committee not recognized but their whole status, even in New York City, is left very much in doubt. The Charter, lifted from the Old Guard, being held by the N.E.C. until such time as its non-partisan committee renders a full and complete report after investigation.

The sessions of the Committee got under way with a fight over jurisdiction. The N.E.C. deciding it was competent to hear the dispute (the word split is anathema). A report brought in by Devere Allen called for lifting the charter from the Old Guard and granting it to the Militants. This was bitterly fought, not only by Oneal and Graham but also by Darlington Hoopes of Penna. To make matters still worse Dan Hoan, who had posed as a pillar of the new Militant leadership of the Socialist Party threw a bomb-shell into the deliberations by sending a letter (he found it convenient to absent himself) suggesting that the five leading factionalists on each side be given a leave of absence from Party activity and an effort be made to compose the difference. No action was taken on this letter but it does indicate that the troubles of this N.E.C. are by no means settled.

Coolidge's amendment, ultimately adopted, called for lifting the charter from "Old Guard" and for investigations by a Temporary Supervisory Committee for the State, to work with a Committee for the N.E.C. A whole series of new elections and conferences are provided—including a new conference in New York State thus disposing of the Utica State Conference. The amendment has a million loopholes and will itself become a source of any number of new difficulties if the "Old Guard" should decide to remain and fight.

The Supervisory Committee appointed for the State consists of Lewis Tonks, Warren Atkin, Murray Baron, Joseph Baskin, F. Brushingham, Emily Bacon, Harold Raitt, Vincent Dancis, Abraham Miller, Charles Garfinkel, Adolph Held, Carlotta Kinsley, William G. Perry, Max Delson and Frank Crosswaite. The Committee from the N.E.C. consists of Allen, Coolidge and Krzcki.

It was during the course of the discussion on this amendment of Coolidge that Hoopes of Penna. finally came over to the position of the majority and this action stimulated the Militants to sharpen their line, at least as far as their speeches were concerned. Krzcki made a very sharp attack against the "Old Guard" leadership in New York, comparing them to the Green-Woll elements in the A. F. of L. and ended his speech by the statement that the Socialist Party would be served best if they were to betake themselves elsewhere.

The decisions of this N.E.C. meeting are characteristic of the vacillating and weak-kneed attitude of the present Militant leadership. Even those muster-

ing sufficient courage to lift the charter from New York—probably because Norman Thomas was directly and irrevocably involved—they had not the stamina to complete the task. Instead they left the New York City and State organization up in the air while still continuing the talk of "peace" and "harmony". These half-way measures will be found to satisfy no one—neither Dan Hoan who is now deeply involved in a United Front with LaFollette and can't be bothered with "petty squabbles", nor the "Old Guard" which has declared war to the knife, nor even the Militants, who are left high and dry.

It must be stated that the attitude of the Militants at the Utica Conference was equally compromising (see article on this page) and deserved no better treatment at the hands of the N.E.C.

The Socialist Party is due for a period of more widespread demoralization and disintegration.

ROOSEVELT OPENS WAR ON OPPOSITION

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT opened his campaign for reelection to the Presidency by his message to the joint session of the House and the Senate. The section dealing with foreign affairs gave warning to "those nations which are dominated by the twin spirits of autocracy and aggression" and has resulted in great resentment in Germany, Italy and Japan.

In the rest of his message on the state of the union he gave in broad outline his plan for strict neutrality in case of war, for a stronger navy and other armed forces, pledges not to increase taxation and to cut down on relief expenditures. The opposition to the New Deal he labeled "our resplendent economic au-

tochry" and stated that now with the progress of recovery these "money changers" were again seeking "the restoration of their selfish power."

As far as home policies his pledge of approaching balancing of the budget coupled with the restriction of relief expenditures has an ominous sound in the ears of the unemployed. In foreign policy the U. S. is placed on the side of the stated imperialist powers against those fighting for a redivision of the world.

CAR STRIKERS FRAMED IN OMAHA, NEB.

ARISING OUT of a street car strike A strike continuing since April 20 the police of Omaha, Nebraska have taken steps to crush the street car union altogether (Local 1002 of the Amalgamated Association).

Utilizing the finding some time ago of unexploded dynamite found in various parts of the city the police drew up warrants charging "conspiracy" or "conspiracy to commit felony by dynamiting" and arrested 16 active workers in the strike. The following are the arrested workers who have not been permitted to contact their attorney and have been grilled for 55 consecutive hours in an effort to concoct a frame-up: William Lux, August Bonacci, John Marasco, John Eggleston, J. M. Kitta, H. P. Steyer, W. W. Pike, C. W. Pike, Ed Lubsen, E. R. Bloomberg, E. C. West, Wm. H. Howard, J. C. Perkins, H. L. Scott, I. Lockwood and R. E. Marschand.

The local press has carefully suppressed all information about the whole matter but the local movement is aroused and an attempt to set up a general defense committee for these workers is under way now.

HAVERHILL SHOE BOSSES CAUSE UNION FEUDS

HAVERHILL SHOE WORKERS are now involved in a general strike because of the refusal of the employers to renew their agreement with the United Shoe and Leather Workers Union. Instead the manufacturers resorted to the old trick of playing one union against the other. They escorted the Boot and Shoe and the Brotherhood into town and while the three are battling it out the bosses are picking the workers' pockets.

The United Shoe demanded and succeeded in securing a referendum of the shoe workers. Out of over 2,000 ballots cast, about 1,200 workers voted for the United while the remaining 800 votes were divided between the Brotherhood and the Boot and Shoe.

Workers from other shoe centers coming in to assist in the strike are being turned back at the town line. Police are very active in their campaign to demoralize the strikers.

MARINE UNIONS on the West Coast are again the center of national attention. Strike action may develop soon. In the meanwhile the A. F. of L. leaders of the various unions involved are planning to take steps against the militant workers. The Chamber of Commerce of San Francisco has also renewed its demand that the Department of Justice step in to assist the shipping interests. This is a combination which may face progressive labor with increasing frequency as the struggle between the conservatives and the progressives in the unions sharpens.

FLAT GLASS WORKERS were ordered out in general strike. Five thousand workers in 8 cities are affected.

United Fur Workers Union Is Tribute to Memory of Gross

By B. BARATZ

Five years have gone by since the death of Aaron Gross, the leader and builder of the Furriers Union.

These five years have been full of stormy momentous days in our untiring efforts to convince the followers of the left-wing leadership amongst the furriers of the correctness of our trade union line.

Back in 1928 at the Profintern Congress Comrade Gross could foresee the results of the disastrous dual union line that was bound to come. He opposed it there and when he came back to the United States, he as actively engaged in preparing the opposition forces in order to prevent this disaster. He opposed the double perspective of some leading members of the C.P. (Foster, etc.) who in one breath spoke of the bourgeoisified workers who owned bonds, automobiles and homes, and a minute later of the wide-spread and deep-going radicalization amongst the American workers. Comrade Gross was among the first to oppose the building of new unions. He was among the first to advocate the regrouping of the left wing and progressive forces in the A. F. of L. unions. He realized at that time, that the withdrawal of the best forces from the reactionary labor unions means the actual condemnation of the revolutionary vanguard of the working class to sterility and death.

Weakened as he was because of the murderous attack made upon him by the right wing in 1927, he devoted most of his energy to this fight and did more than his health permitted to achieve this aim. As a practical man, he looked forward to such policies and tactics that would benefit the workers immediately and prepare them ideologically for the future.

Comrade Gross was always in the first line trenches. As one of the most important leaders in the 1926 strike he was entrusted with the job of chairman of the Finance Committee. He had a watchful eye on all expenditures and also on the general conduct of the strike. It was a well known fact which Gold never denied, that it was upon the advice of Gross that the Furriers Union was able to adjust many difficult problems.

In an estimate of the life of Comrade Gross the labor Editor of the Freiheit in 1930 attributes all the shortcomings of Gold's leadership to Comrade Gross' stubbornness. But this was done with the intention of discrediting the name of Comrade Gross, to mislead those who followed the line advocated by him. Yes, Comrade Gross was stubborn when he was right. So were we, when we foresaw the disastrous results of dual unionism for the workers of this country. It is for these ideas advocated by the C.P.O. that Comrade Gross and others were branded as "traitors" and "renegades."

There is much to regret that Comrade Gross, who sacrificed himself in order to bring about a correctness of the ultra-left ideology, did not live to see the day of turn, the reunification of the trade union movement generally and the furriers in particular. We, who continued the fight for unity, who suffered from all kinds of physical attacks, and abuse because of our convictions, believe that the early death of Comrade Gross retarded our fight for unity. It was not an easy task to convince the fur workers of the ruin that dual unionism would bring. The furriers had to go through certain stages until they finally could grasp the essence of our correct trade union line. Now we can proudly say: though the death of Comrade Gross was an irreparable loss to us, yet because of our correct approach we have succeeded in bringing about a condition where all shades of opinion can be found in the united union.

This fight as well as the accomplished



unity is the best monument that we of the furriers fraction as well as of the progressive group could build. We hail the name of our beloved Comrade Gross, just as we hail our victorious achievement of unity, for which he fought in his last days. In this day of the fifth anniversary, we pledge ourselves to carry on this fight for the further strengthening of our movement for complete reunification of the entire labor movement, for the building of a real movement against war and Fascism based upon the trade unions; for the establishment of a Labor Party. It is only in this sense that we will be able to repair the loss of our comrades, who have fallen victims in the course of the class struggle.

Motor Products-- Lesson in Multi-Unionism

The tragic price the workers must pay for disunity and dual unionism can find no better illustration than in the confused struggle now being waged against the Motor Products Company of Detroit. Here you have an astute management playing three unions against each other, a typically bureaucratic labor leadership doing all in its power to forestall strike action, a brutal police force and a kept press aiding as strike-breakers.

The strike in the Motor Products plant started on Nov. 15 after negotiations had resulted in a deadlock. The call came from the Automotive Industrial Workers Association but the plant members of the Mechanics Educational Society and of the two A. F. of L. locals, the Metal Polishers and the United Auto Workers, also came out. For several days the strike was solid, although Dillon, Green's stooge in the United Auto Workers, rejected all formal offers of unity and scurried around denouncing the strike at every possible opportunity.

Then on Nov. 25, apparently believing that the management was going to permit a plant vote under Labor Board auspices, Dillon sent the A. F. of L. men back to work, through the picket lines under police guard. This action was denounced, and very correctly so, as "a new low in working class betrayals."

At the same time the Motor Products management was able to play the independent unions against the A. F. of L. more subtly, but nevertheless effectively. The prostitute press of Detroit headlined the leaders of the independent unions, giving Matthew Smith's declaration of "democracy within the new unions" front page space, and discussing the inadequacy of the craft union form. Thus the anti-A. F. of L. sentiment and the strong dual unionist orientation in the independent unions was further strengthened.

After having smashed whatever unity the strike had had the management cracked down hard on both sides. Thug and police surrounded the strikers, not on the picket line but at their headquarters, beat them up, broke arms, killed one man.

The breath of fresh air in this tragic picture was the appearance on the scene of the representative of the Committee for Industrial Organization. Without official status he could only investigate but his presence brought added hope to the progressives who are fighting for unity against the motor barons. Progressive auto workers are sponsoring resolutions and meetings in the locals of all the unions to popularize the ideas underlying the Committee for Industrial Organization. Dillon made it clear that he would not support activities along industrial lines—a fact which he has adequately proved by refusing to admit the Toledo local with its 11,000 members into the auto international, insisting that it be split into craft divisions.

The latent class-consciousness of the A. F. of L. workers finally asserted itself on Dec. 21 when they walked out to join the strike without benefit of official sanction. Meanwhile the three independent unions have held a unity conference which is to re-convene on Feb. 1. At that time they will probably form the Automotive and Metal Trades Industrial Union. It is to be hoped that before that time steps toward unity with the A. F. of L. will have been made. The necessity for this inevitable act has already been admitted by Smith, erstwhile foe of the A. F. of L. who declared on Dec. 10, "We recognize that the main stream of the labor movement is within the A. F. of L."

LOSING THEIR CHAINS... by James Sand Samuel Gompers Before 1900

THE DEVELOPMENT of the little cigarmaker who arrived from Whitechapel, England, with his parents, at the age of thirteen, into the pompous, bombastic old man who threw the American Federation of Labor into the war behind American imperialism, and carved a niche for himself in the labor chapters of American history textbooks, is the greatest success-story in the history of the labor movement anywhere. Yet, intermediate to that development and enmeshed in all his theoretical mistakes, there lie his contributions to the labor movement.

The greater error in his character was his inability to change his approach to labor organization as class-relations changed and the temper of the workers in relation to economic forces also changed. From the time his ideas crystallized, which we can roughly date as 1900, the road of Gompers was certain. That year is chosen to demarcate the two periods in his life not because it was the turn of the century in harmony with which Gompers turned, not because in that year Gompers reached the age of fifty; but because by that year it was clear to all who had eyes to see and were willing to look at social realities squarely that the American Federation of Labor had definitely made itself the organization of labor towards which the American worker was orienting himself and towards which Marxists would have to orient themselves in their work of revolutionizing the proletariat here.

Gompers' theory and practice cannot be understood except in terms of the theories and practices to which he reacted so violently during the formative period of the federation. What Gompers was looking for when he came to early consciousness of labor organization was a national group holding views on trade unionism that would work, would endure, and steer clear of the rocks which he thought had wrecked its predecessors and contemporaries. Gompers was the pragmatist of American labor, the John Dewey of labor theory. Four opponents brought him to his ideological maturation: (1) The Knights of Labor; (2) industrial unionism; (3) socialism; (4) anarchism. The Knights he derided because they were not trade-unionist, because they dabbled in reformist politics, because their cigar-makers' union was at loggerheads with Gompers and Strasser's. Industrial unionism Gompers first met in the form of Daniel DeLeon. He saw in it the evils of the Knights' industrial unionism, a primitive form arrived at through confusion and general acceptance of all workers rather than through reason and hard maneuvering. DeLeon's industrial unionism he mistook for the Knights. Industrial unionism was to hound him throughout his life, and he was to sidestep it, meet it, fight it, try to conciliate it, according as the strength of its cohorts grew or declined.

Socialists he came to hate. Before he came to hate them, he tried to curry favor with them. In the 1894 national convention of the A. F. of L. they were strong, and it seemed certain they would be able to elect their candidate as president of the federation. Gompers with his keen political nose sensed this, and for the first and last time he saluted the delegates from the presidential rostrum, not as "Brothers" but as "Comrades and Fellow-workers." It did not save him; DeLeon succeeded in getting McBride elected for 1894-5. This was the only year that Gompers was not president of the federation. From 1896, the date of the formation of the present A. F. of L. until the year of his death, 1924, he held the highest office in the power of organized American labor to give. But Socialism also advocated independent political action by labor and Gompers had seen political action by labor fail and react unfavorably on labor organization. Furthermore, he felt that Socialism's goal was utopian; it was certainly too distant for his theoretical untutored mind to see clearly. Some years after 1900 he uttered his final opinion on Socialism with this rhetorical, absurd thunder: "Economically you are unsound; socially you are wrong; industrially you are an impossibility." But that was when Gompers was quite sure he could not be unseated by Socialist votes. Anarchism became anathema to Sam (he said that anyone who cared two cents for him always called him Sam) after the Haymarket affair in 1886. It was not long before it became confused in Sam's mind with Socialism, and thus he conserved his energy by fighting two enemies with but one flow of rhetoric.

On this background Gompers views on political action and trade-unionism become clear. In the field of political action he opposed either a labor party or Socialism. In the constitution of the A. F. of L. there was incorporated the clause: "Party politics, whether they be Democratic, Republican, Socialistic, Populistic, Prohibition, or any other, shall have no place in the conventions of the American Federation of Labor." He became the apostle of "pure and simple" trade-unionism and of "punishing labor's enemies and rewarding labor friends" in the field of politics. His first vote was for Grant for president. After that he left the Republican party of which he was a member and never joined any other. This stand on politics he never altered all the years of his life; in fact, his opposition was intensified as bourgeois success was showered upon him during the World War.

Gompers' trade-union stand has rightly been called "business-unionism." It was first of all craft-unionism. Gompers saw that the skilled workers had most to bargain with against the employers and he held that the semi-skilled and unskilled would both weaken the skilled position as well as thrust the skilled trades into the semi-skilled and unskilled strikes from which at this early date they had little to gain. Labor, Gompers came to look upon as a competitor in the open market, haggling, striking, bargaining, compromising. High dues and restriction of membership went *pari passu* with craft unionism.

THE UTICA CONVENTION

(Continued from Page 1)

disapproval with the seating of the so-called "expelled" Buffalo members. This accounted, in large measure, for the Militant's attempts to play down the Buffalo "armed insurrectionists" and soft pedal political issues in order to avoid any break with Hoan.

The treatment of RPPA delegates was interesting as well as indicative. Their attempts to arouse political discussion was constantly frustrated and sidetracked. In the election for state committee members, the "Militants" agreed

to one Buffalo member but rejected Hahn as a candidate because of his place in the "armed insurrection" battle. Raitt a lesser known expellee was acceptable as a candidate. The "Militants" are determined to get N.E.C. recognition even if political decapitation is the price.

The N.E.C. subcommittee, scheduled to appear as an unofficial recognition committee, failed to put in its appearance. The only N.E.C. member present was Norman Thomas—participating as a state member in the convention. The failure of the N.E.C. to put in its appearance may be characterized as: **Coming Events Cast Their Shadows Before!**

In his later disputes with industrial unionists and the Wobblies, Gompers enunciated his doctrine of "voluntarism." Union were to be formed by workers of their own free will. Local, national, and international unions were to have autonomy. The organization of the A. F. of L. was to be very loose. The president's power is dependent upon his ability to place strong men around him, to wield prestige, to formulate policies within the executive council between conventions, and to act as liaison officer with the general public. Of the office Gompers made a great deal; in comparison with him William Green, his successor and the present incumbent, is pallid and incompetent.

It must be admitted that the craft basis of the federation with its roots in the skilled trades was the only core around which a national organization of labor could have been successfully built up until 1900. The immigration waves which led to shifting armies of unskilled and semi-skilled, the possibilities of "rugged individualism" making workers capitalists in some few cases, the entire welter and nexus of causes which made the still young and impetuous nation of people what it was in the mauve decades, forced such unionism on any one who expected to keep an organization intact through the dizzy years of the rise of American capitalism.

Samuel Gompers was born in January 27th, 1850 in London, England. The family was very poor, and the young boy was taught the trade of cigar-making by his father. He attended the synagogue and amassed some talmudical knowledge. In the heyday of his glory, decades later, he sedulously avoided admitting his Jewish birth; earlier he had the temerity to use the charge of Jewishness against DeLeon as an argument against his conception of trade unionism. Sylvia Kopald has spoken of the studied non-Jewishness of Gompers' later public life, and it is a just commentary.

At fourteen Gompers joined the Cigarmakers' International Union, and later became a member of the Knights of Labor. He came under the influence of Ferdinand Laurell who advised him to "attend the Socialist meetings, listen to what they have to say and understand them, but do not join the party." The same great mind taught him that "Socialists the world over are of the same mental calibre—there is only one way to deal with them—don't argue, just tell them." Among the cigarmakers he came to know Adolph Strasser, and he came under the salubrious influence of Sorge, from whom he learned the principles of trade unionism. In the early years, until he was about thirty, Sam thought of himself as something of a Marxist, and in his autobiography, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor*, he talks familiarly about a man named "Fred" Engels. He says nothing of "Charlie" Marx as his friend, however.

On November 15th, 1881 the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions met at Pittsburgh. Gompers was made chairman of the committee on plan of organization. He brought in a plan for "pure and simple" craft-unionism, opposing co-operatives, political reformism, etc. It raised a row, and was defeated. The delegates of the unskilled workers complained, and the Knights of Labor delegates threatened to withdraw. This early federation was not a strong organization; it was, as one historian has it, "an annual meeting." Gompers himself thought little of it, and was working to have the Cigarmakers International Union amalgamate with the Knights' Progressive Cigar Makers. The Knights' executive board answered to that:

"We hardly think that the millions of the Knights of Labor whose Order was founded by the sainted Stephens for the very purpose of counteracting the selfish sectarianism of the trade unions are yet prepared to step down and out in favor of a few organized cigar makers who do not even constitute a majority of the trade."

From this time on Gompers' eyes are set on a new national organization of labor. The present American Federation of Labor was formed in Columbus, Ohio, on December 8th, 1886, and Gompers put the old federation into the new organization. The Knights were not seated there, and Gompers was elected the first president of the American Federation of Labor. Until the demise of the Knights in 1893, dickering and quarrels went on. In 1889 the American Federation of Labor proposed that the Knights "discourteousness and revoke the charters of all trades assemblies or districts within the Order," and, in return, the A. F. of L. would "urge its members and all working people to become members of the Knights of Labor." This failed, and the struggle became one to the death. The Knights died.

In 1894 there came the great Pullman strike in Chicago, "Debs' Rebellion." Debs had formed an industrial union of railroad workers opposed to the craft unionism of the railroad brotherhoods, and 100,000 workers were in it. But the general strike that Debs asked Gompers to call after arbitration failed, scared Sam off, and he left Debs to lead the strike without the help of the federation.

There came the fight with DeLeon and the secession of the Socialist Labor Party into the ill-fated Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance. Gompers won out here when those discontented with the S.L.P.'s sectarianism and its dual-unionist tactics formed the present Socialist Party in 1900, and pledged themselves to the task of winning over the A. F. of L. to Socialism.

By 1900 the American Federation of Labor had fended off its enemies and had enrolled under its banner 500,000 workers. It faced the future with courage and assurance. It was to meet new opponents within five years, defeat them, but Gompers refused to learn from them. He became as hardened in his errors as he was confirmed in his truths, and he was not to be moved except by death.

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