

American Reactions to News, Domestic and Worldwide

The A. F. of L. Proves Its Americanism

By John J. Leary, Jr.

THIS has been one of the best conventions in the history of the American Federation of Labor. It proves the American labor movement is sound to the core, its feet on the ground, its head erect and unbowed, confident of itself, its country and the future of both.

Samuel Gompers, the father of the American Federation of Labor, thus summed up the Atlantic City convention of that organization in its closing hours. In him spoke the spirit of the delegates, for while there have been conventions where enthusiasm was more rampant and of the sky rocket order there seldom has been one in which optimism was so clearly the dominant note.

It differed in this respect from the preceding convention in St. Paul, and the first war convention in Buffalo. In the latter Gompers and his loyal lieutenants were fighting with their backs to the wall against a powerful, well organized, well financed element that would have limited labor's participation in the war if it could. In St. Paul the same element was seeking the opportunity to commit labor to the policy of a negotiated peace, if not of defeatism. In neither convention were they strong enough to dare fight in the open, but they were always present, an element of potential danger to the cause of America and her allies.

In both of these conventions the dominant note was determination to see the thing through, tempered a bit by doubts as to when it would be through and what might develop in the meantime. There was confidence in plenty, confidence of the quiet, determined kind that one associates with men blue eyed, soft spoken, square jawed, but not much optimism.

In Atlantic City the convention was made up of much the same soft-spoken, square-jawed men, but the dominant note was optimism. With but one notable exception, they looked for the biggest business boom the country has ever known, confident that labor will get its full share of the benefits thereof and prepared to do their bit toward helping the boom along. In the case of the one exception—Frank J. Hayes, of the miners—special conditions in his craft made him pessimistic as to the immediate future of his people, but, on the whole situation, he, too, was, to use a Wall Street expression, bullish.

Next to this spirit of optimism, the next note of importance was determination to smash everything that savored of or resembled Bolshevism in the moment it showed its head. For this there was a reason. During the war and previously the element which would make labor appear disloyal had been noisy and at times troublesome. It



—And It Happened Almost Like This! —Cleveland Plaindealer

had been at times necessary, as a matter of public policy, to be lenient with it, to allow a large amount of leeway. This necessary had passed.

But with its passing came the programme of the same "serious groups of little thinkers," as one labor man described them, to make as much trouble as possible, to upset the federation from its foundations, wreck the great international unions which are its pillars and on the ruins build "one big union" as a means toward Bolshevism, Sovietism and a dozen and one cure-alls, most of them "made in Germany."

This group had made elaborate programmes and had flooded the country with declarations as to what they intended to do. To the man not acquainted with their methods and their psychology it appeared as though radicalism was really about to take possession of the organized labor movement. Much, therefore, in the spirit of the man who posted the sign, "If you want to see who's boss here, start something," the overwhelming majority of the delegates went into the convention. The student of mass psychology easily sensed their determination and their power to make that determination good.

It was not a difficult task, for in all truth there was more "red" about the press tables than in the seats of

the delegates. By actual count there were more of the so-called intellectuals, claiming connection with every radical weekly or monthly under the sun, than there were "red" delegates in the convention.

They were of all types and kinds, from John Reed, who has called himself the Bolshevik ambassador, to the miss fresh from college who bemoaned the fact that the convention was "doing nothing for Finland" until a mere roughneck suggested that Finland was "a devil of a distance from the Bowery," and "anyway, why don't the Finns start something?" There were so many of this type that at times the working newspaper men found it difficult to work.

On the side lines, too, were many of the same type—the theorists denounced in one session of the convention for assuming to speak for labor. The mark of this tribe is the leather brief case—"working card," one delegate called it. With the bulk of the delegates they had little to do. But they did "just dote" on James "Resolution" Duncan, the fiery haired radical from Seattle. They also doted on Andrew Furuseth, the lanky leader of the seamen, until he broke their hearts by opposing the league of nations on cold practical grounds. Then they abandoned Andrew, of whom they had expected soulful things, as a "mere materialist."

The fall of the "one big union" idea, the smashing repudiation of the Mooney general strike, the defeat of the various moves calculated to bring the Seattle plan effective and making nearer the Bolshevik millennium depressed these souls.

To them the decision of the American

can Federation of Labor, with but one dissenting vote, to not only admit the negro into full trades union fellowship, but to reach out and bring him in, declared by Gompers to be the most important step the Federation had taken in many years, signified nothing. As Frank Duffy, the strong man of the carpenters, put it, "The negroes are too near home to interest such folks. Hills far off always did look green to some people."

Not that there was any lack of democracy among the delegates or any denial of free speech to any one with anything to say. There is no limit to the number of resolutions any delegate may offer, no censorship as to the subjects he may elect. Be it ever so foolish—witness that of a man from the Far West who would make twenty-four hours' residence in a town a sufficient qualification for voting—the resolution will be printed in the record, will be given a hearing by a committee and be reported out. Nothing ever dies in committee.

On these reports when they come out the only limit is a ten-minute rule on each speaker and the patience of the delegates. If the proponent (or opponent) has anything to say the convention is glad to extend his time; if he hasn't anything worth saying cries of "Question!" mark his finish.

It is this tolerance, this willingness to consider everything any delegate thinks worth while presenting, that kept the convention in session more than two weeks. A less deliberate body would have done all its business in one-third the time and gone home.

The prohibition question, scheduled to make much trouble, was easily disposed of. It was to be expected that the convention would oppose the bonedry law. The vote for 2.75 per cent beer, therefore, was not significant. It was significant, however, that not a

word was spoken for whiskey, and it was of more significance that more than 4,000 votes were cast for prohibition. Two years ago it could not have commanded four dozen. More than that, the vote did not represent the real strength of prohibition in the convention. Some of the strongest men in the convention, men with the largest blocks of votes, in their private talk let it be known that they were with the "drys."

There are reasons for this leaning toward prohibition and for the failure to vote as they thought. The prohibition sentiment is due, as the head of one of the biggest unions told me, to the belief that the unions thrive in dry territory. "Our locals," he said, "in dry territory are in far better shape than in wet territory. It is easier to organize, the books are 'cleaner' (fewer delinquents), there is a better attendance at meetings. When we strike we are not worried lest some drunken fool does some stunt that gets us all in bad. And the poor devil who, because he has been a booze hound, is the first to go back to work in order to live is not with us."

As a statement of cold fact that is interesting. As a prediction what he added is likewise of interest.

"I believe," said he, "that the prohibition movement was largely financed by manufacturers and others looking for greater efficiency. I believe they will get it. But it won't be a kind of efficiency they will welcome. It will be a kind of efficiency they will pay for through the nose. I refer, of course, to trade union efficiency."

For the apparent hypocrisy in men like this voting wet there are two explanations—sympathy for men who may lose their employment and politics. There are politics in the labor movement—one never knows when he will need a block of votes for something his

union wishes. Therefore the habit of back scratching, familiar in all political conventions, is not missing in national labor conventions.

On the league of nations there was a wide divergence of opinions, exactly as one will find wide differences of opinion in any considerable group of men and women. The only folks really interested were convention leaders, who sought to keep clear the record of having stood by the Administration, and the Irish sympathizers, who, careless of what happened the treaty or the league as a whole, were determined that nothing prejudicial to Ireland's cause should pass.

These Irishmen were in a minority in the convention, but the Irishman's genius for politics made it easy for them to make their point. To a harmless resolution that meant nothing they tacked on amendments until the thing had more teeth than a shark. The amendment that put most of the incisors into the declaration was clearly out of order, but Gompers, wise parliamentarian, ruled against his friend, Vice-President James Duncan (no relation, please, to the man from Seattle), when that gentleman sought to make it.

Gompers knew that to do so would be to invite an appeal from the chair and an upset, and Gompers never fights for the mere sake of being whipped. The Irish had the votes, and he was willing to let them have the results.

The worth-while things—resolutions calling for the removal of Bursleson, for better working conditions for underpaid government employes and better wages for teachers, along with better school facilities, shorter workdays for all—these things went through easily and without much debate.

It was, on the whole, an average gathering of average Americans—just such a gathering as one would find in Chicago at a Republican National Convention or in St. Louis, where the Democrats may meet, with this exception—absolute freedom of discussion, and no committee to kill things quietly.

It was such a convention that, viewed by one not familiar with the labor movement, would have convinced him that the idea that the labor movement is a thing apart, that the labor leader is sui generis, is founded not on fact but on fancy. He would have found average Americans eager to better their condition and the conditions of their families, just as he would have found a convention of bankers eager to help their trade (or profession), that the labor men, like most human beings, prefer their food cooked, that they do not throw cuspidors at the clock or chairs at the presiding officer, and that all have an abiding faith in America and its institutions.

He would have found among them no delusion that the United States is a place of perfect residence, but he would have found confidence that gradually, but none the less surely, the United States is becoming a better place to work and live in.

In a word, he would have found that could he get a cross section of the mass of 3,000,000 men and women who make up the American Federation of Labor and could superimpose it upon a cross section of the mass of 100,000,000 people inhabiting these United States, he would find the lines and the markings to be amazingly alike.

In both there would be what the chemists call a trace of Bolshevism or its equivalent. On the plates it would not show red. It would be a very, very faint pink.



No Credentials —Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Wayside Points of View

July 4 is being well advertised.—Detroit Journal.

The Limit

We suggest if there is to be "an old-fashioned Fourth to celebrate the winning of the war" that it be held not later than June 30.—Philadelphia Inquirer.

Emphatically!

We shall need a Society for the Conservation of Languages after July 4.—New York Sun.

Beware!

The citizen who is busily engaged in acquiring a cellar full of forbidden waters should be warned against hoarding.—Washington Evening Star.

With Our Own Bolsheviki



LATEST VICTIM OF A GOOD OLD JOKE

—Kansas City Times

Fresh

Yale's degree of LL.D., conferred on Admiral Sims, carried this citation: "A salt that has not lost his savour." Rather fresh for a dignified university, we'll say.—Philadelphia Record.

How It Feels

Wonder whether the former Kaiser considers a force limited to 200,000 a "contemptible little army."—Omaha Bee.

1920

Germany is reaping the whirlwind.—Philadelphia Public Ledger.

First Come First Served

The Reds devote most of their energies to efforts to scare everybody, including one another.—Washington Evening Star.

Re Berger

Victor Berger preaches free speech and a free press, but what Victor is most concerned for just now is free convicts.—Kansas City Journal.

Aren't We?

One big union? What's the matter with the United States?—Minnesota Journal.

Foresight

Considering the rocky road of political parties in this country, the American Federation of Labor is wise in refusing to form one.—Washington Post.

Thanks—We Do!

Anyhow, we are glad the wheat crop outlook is all right. Anybody who wants our share of cornbread from now on can have it.—Charleston News and Courier.

On the Other Hand

What's it to us that this year we will harvest our largest wheat crop, a third of the world's yield? The public will continue to pay a high price for bread.—Bridgeport Standard-Telegram.

But How?

That undeniable luxury, the beefsteak, has managed to escape taxation as such.—Washington Evening Star.

Loads of Time

And talk that the president will return by airplane is manifestly absurd. He's in no such hurry.—Philadelphia Press.

Two Propositions Entirely

The average Mexican has a theory that Mexico could lick the United States, but that it is dangerous business to trifle with Texas.—Topeka Capital.

Maybe Not at All

Getting yourself put in jail does not prove that you are either a public benefactor or an unrewarded martyr.—Philadelphia Public Ledger.

See Bauer's Speech

Why not a peace song entitled, "Till the Machine Guns Nest again"?—Boston Herald.

He Simply Can't

Postmaster General Bursleson pretends to be incapable of understanding how any one can attack him on his official record except from personal motives.—New York World.

Strike July 4?

DESPITE the rejection of the July 4 Mooney strike plan by the American Federation of Labor convention at Atlantic City last week, polling of various labor unions in the cities of the country by the Mooney Defence Council and the International Workers' Defence League has been going on as before with an increasing number of adherents claimed daily. Official action of the American Federation of Labor is being ignored by radical labor sects, including the I. W. W., the Socialist Labor party, the Workers' International Industrial Union and the Bolshevik Workers, Soldiers and Sailors' Councils recently organized in this country. The International Workers' Defence League, an organization made up of various radical labor types, is the chief proponent of the movement which contemplates a series of five-day strikes in event the first one set for July 4 fails to obtain the release of Mooney. Other strikes would follow in September and November, according to the plan.

Percentages of union labor members favoring the proposed strike are reported by leaders of the strike movement as sufficient to bring about a general walkout. Millions of slips of paper sent out as "Mooney ballots" are being used for a straw vote, under the auspices of the headquarters in Chicago of the International Workers' Defence League. According to the announcements from these headquarters the majority of the rank and file of the American Federation of Labor are favorable to the strike. "The New

York Call," Socialist organ of New York, recently stated that 1,500,000 members of the American Federation of Labor out of a total of approximately 3,200,000 had voted for the walkout.

The Butte Labor Council, Milwaukee Labor Council, Philadelphia Labor Council, Detroit Labor Council and, according to "The Seattle Union Record," the Seattle Union Labor Council all have declared for the walkout. Since the mass of the balloting has been taken, however, the disapproval of the union labor convention at Atlantic City has served to offset somewhat the sentiment favoring the strike. But that there will be a strike, and others like it to follow if the first one is not fruitful, is the persistent contention of those organizations and leaders behind the movement from its inception in April of the present year at a Chicago conference of the Mooney case called by the Chicago Federation of Labor. Mooney defence leagues have been organized in all large industrial centres of the country and it is through these directly that the strike agitation has been promoted and the ballots taken. Each of these organizations is an outgrowth of the blanket organization known as the International Workers' Defence League.

The strike sentiment is confined largely to the western, northern and central states. Funds are being raised in these sections with which to augment the forces of strike agitation in the East. The slogan of the International Workers' Defence League is "Organize, educate, act."

At Home

THE right to store liquor in your own home after July 1 was upheld by the House Judiciary Committee in considering the bill for the enforcement of the prohibition amendment. The "wets" still hope President Wilson will issue a proclamation setting aside war-time prohibition, and they are also planning to ask for an injunction against the enforcement of the law.

The fight to obtain a vote on the Knox resolution divorcing the league of nations covenant from the peace treaty was abandoned by the Republican Senators, who line up behind the Root plan to ratify the treaty with reservations. Two resolutions were introduced in the Senate providing for immediate peace with Germany and the prompt return of troops and naval forces to this country. The purpose of the resolutions is to give the Senate time to consider the treaty without barring the United States from trade with Germany while other countries could resume commercial relations. The Foreign Relations Committee blocked action on the resolution by voting to delay action for the present.

Two bills were introduced in the house of Representatives providing heavy penalties, including deportation, for aliens advocating anarchistic and revolutionary doctrines.

Senate and House conferees on legislation to repeal government control of telegraph, telephone and other wire systems adopted the

House plan of ending government control on the last day of the calendar month in which the law is approved. As it is believed the report will be promptly adopted by both branches of the Congress and President Wilson will sign it without delay, government wire control is expected to end July 31. Present wire rates will be continued for four months unless sooner changed by state commissions under the conference agreement.

Secretary Baker reported to the War Expenditures Special Committee that up to June 1 the War Department had spent for all purposes since the beginning of the war \$14,544,210,213.

At the closing of its annual convention in Atlantic City the American Federation of Labor went on record in favor of the forty-four hour week and directed the Executive Council to work for it. Labor leaders in New York predicted an early victory in the fight for a forty-four-hour week. Judge Elbert H. Gary, chairman of the board of directors of the United States Steel Corporation, said in a commencement day address at Trinity College, Hartford, Conn., that labor was as keen as capital to protect the institutions of this country and there was no prospect of demoralization, revolution or retrogression.

Eamon de Valera, president of the "Irish republic," arrived in New York on a hunt for a \$5,000,000 loan to the "republic," interest to begin "six months after the British forces have evacuated Ireland," and American recognition for the "republic." Valera refused to tell how he came to this country or

when he arrived, but he indicated that there was something novel about his mode of travel.

The Lusk committee investigating seditious activities in New York State is planning a round-up of "parlor" Bolsheviks.

Former soldiers at Ocean Grove are preparing to stop Robert M. La Follette from speaking there July 6.

A tornado killed between 300 and 400 persons at Fergus Falls, Minn. Mrs. Clarence Millhiser, widow of a Richmond, Va., merchant, reported to the management of the Hotel Biltmore the theft of \$300,000 worth jewelry.

Francis M. Hugo, Secretary of State, announced his candidacy for the Republican nomination for Governor of New York, being the first in the field as an avowed candidate for the nomination.

Abroad

AFTER many attempts to secure a modification of the peace terms and more time to consider before signing, the new German cabinet, under Premier Gustav Bauer, formally notified the peace conference on Monday, two hours before the time allowed expired, that Germany would sign the treaty as it stood. Trouble immediately developed in finding some one to sign the treaty for Germany. Dr. Haniel von Haimhausen, who handed the German note of acceptance of the treaty to the French Foreign Office, resigned from the German peace delegation rather than sign the treaty. Hermann Mueller, the new German Foreign Minister, who was then

designated to sign, declined to go to Versailles. Field Marshal von Hindenburg resigned the chief command of the army. Feeling in the German army ran very high against the treaty. The former Crown Prince escaped from Holland and made his way back to Germany. A military revolt and attempt to restore the monarchy was feared. The Allies prepared an ultimatum requiring Germany to sign the treaty within a time limit and Marshal Foch was prepared to move at once.

"We have waited forty-nine years for this moment!" Premier Clemenceau exclaimed, as he opened the dispatch announcing that Germany would sign the treaty.

Premier Bauer, addressing the German National Assembly at Weimar that voted to sign the treaty, said: "Let us sign, but it is our hope to the last breath that this attempt against our honor may one day recoil against its authors." Paris started a new celebration carnival when the news arrived that Germany would sign.

The new German Cabinet is expected to fall as soon as the treaty is signed, and the old Cabinet will return to power.

Georges Leygues, Minister of Marine in the French government, said France would require full reparation from Germany for the warships sunk off Scapa Flow. He said the act of the Germans violated both the armistice and the peace treaty. The council of three of the peace conference has referred the question of the sinking of the ships to a commission of experts, who will determine if the armistice provisions were violated.

:- The Week :-