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John P. Frey, A Pioneer In A. F. of L. Movement

(John P. Frey will hold the new title of president emeritus of the AFL Metal Trades department when the annual convention begins September 14, 1950, at Houston, Texas. This is the story):

Washington. — On Thursday, May 4, the resignation of John P. Frey as president of the Metal Trades department was received and accepted by the Executive Council of the department, at its meeting in Philadelphia.

This resignation was received with great reluctance by the council, but it did not come as any surprise. Mr. Frey had intimated on various occasions his desire to retire from active service in the trade union movement, to be able to devote more time to special aspects of it.

John Frey was born on Feb. 24, 1871, in Mankato, Minn. Reversing the general trend of "Go West Young Man," John went east and on May 10 of 1896 was initiated into the Molders Union No. 5, Worcester, Mass.

Those were the days when trade unionism, outside of those who were a part of it was not too popular.

On July 1, 1896, John became president of the local union of Molders, and a delegate to the Worcester Central Labor Council. His force was soon recognized in the Central Labor Union. In 1899 he became the delegate from his local union to the convention of the Massachusetts State Federation of Labor, and at that time was elected as one of the vice presidents.

In 1903, John was elected as editor of The Molders' Journal. It was during this editorship that The Molders' Journal became recognized by the entire trade union movement, by economists, and by students of history as being a moving force in the progress of the trade union movement and as making a great contribution to the understanding of the philosophy of the trade union movement.

In addition to the duties as editor, John remained as an organizer, and was in charge of strikes supported by the International Union. He was also one of the negotiators with the Foundrymen. Again during this period, the evils of the injunction, the yellow-dog contract and their effect upon union organization and the rights of the human being became increasingly apparent.

In 1924 John was placed in complete charge of all organizing activities for the International Union.

That John Frey's career and experiences in the trade union for he was also an author, having written several books which received wide acclaim.

His first book was titled, "An American Molder in Europe," based upon his own experiences gained as a result of a visit to many European countries. His second, published in 1922, was entitled, "The Labor Injunction." This book played a great part in making the trade unions of America aware of the evils of the injunction and aided in the trade union effort to have the Norris-LaGuardia Anti-injunction Bill adopted by the national Congress. It might be added that, for three years, John was a member of the AFL committee of three which worked with the subcommittee of the U. S. Senate committee on judiciary, which drafted the Anti-injunction Bill. In 1944, John wrote a book entitled, "Craft Unions of Ancient and Modern Times," a history of the trade union movement and the efforts of men to organize to protect their own interests almost since the advent of civilization.

John Frey served as a member of the Hoxie committee in 1913 and 1914, which made a study of scientific management and labor. This study exposed the fallacy and menace of scientific management then becoming

widespread in industry, and further served as material for the study of the Industrial Relations commission.

The Government Defense agencies had indicated intentions to institute scientific management systems in their facilities. It was as a result of the Hoxie committee's study and findings and the resultant testimony before Senate and House Committees on Labor that prohibitive clauses to the use of scientific management proposals in defense facilities were adopted. These studies clearly demonstrated the menace of the speed-up, stretch-out and other engineering proposals, which made an automaton of the individual, rather than a human being.

John was chosen on several occasions to represent either the American Federation of Labor, or the United States on missions to Europe. He served as a fraternal delegate to the British Trade Union Congress in 1909. He was secretary of the first labor mission, appointed by President Wilson from the United States to Allied countries in 1918. He accompanied President Gompers to Europe in 1918 in support of the over-all war effort. He attended the 1921 and 1924 conventions of the Pan-American Federation of Labor, representing the AFL. In 1927 he was a labor advisor to the American Delegation of the International Labor Economic Conference in Geneva Switzerland.

John became recognized as a national figure in the trade union movement with his election to the American Federation of Labor convention in 1901; a delegateship to which he was regularly elected, with two years' exception, through 1949. He served as secretary of the Committee on Resolutions of the AFL convention, continually from 1908 through 1924. In 1934 he again became secretary of the Committee on Resolutions and served through 1949. Few men in the union movement have made their influence felt in AFL conventions as much as has John Frey. He was a close personal friend and confidante of President Sam Gompers for a great many years.

The city of Norwood, Ohio, where he made his home after leaving Worcester to become part of the international family of the Molders, honored him by making him president of the Board of Education, in which capacity he served from 1917 through 1921.

Also, during this period of residence in the State of Ohio, he became president of the Ohio State Federation of Labor from 1924 through 1928. It was during his term of office as president of the State Federation of Labor that the federation sponsored the Anti-Yellow Dog Contract bill and served as a pattern for other State Federations of Labor to follow. The Ohio law was incorporated in its entirety, in the Norris-LaGuardia Anti-injunction bill.

He was commissioned a lieutenant colonel in the Specialist Reserves, U. S. Army, in 1928. He had rendered yeoman service to the armed services of the country, not only during the preceding war, but in the post-war period. He served for many years as the liaison officer between the American Federation of Labor and the War Department of the United States, being appointed to this office by the president of the AFL.

In 1907 John Frey, in company with other leaders of the trade union movement, instituted a program within the American Federation of Labor providing for the formation of the Metal Trades department. This organization became a reality in 1908, and was officially chartered by the AFL.

John Frey served as secretary of that formative committee. From that period up to 1927, he served as a delegate from the Molders' Union to the Metal Trades department conventions. In 1927 he was elected secretary-treasurer of the department. In 1934 he ascended to the presidency of the department. His accomplishments as president of the Metal Trades department have been many and his effect will be permanently felt by the entire trade union movement and the organizations a part of the department.

It was during this period that he presented lengthy and detailed studies to the Senate Sub-

Smokey Says:



Don't let the excitement of a good strike make you forget that burning match!

committee of the Judiciary on Interlocking Corporation Directorates. Following the recommendations of this committee, the Pecora Committee was created by the United States Senate, whose findings resulted in the passage by Congress of most necessary regulatory legislation on monopolies and trusts.

For many years John Frey had been calling to the attention of the trade union movement, the Federal government and all within reach, the infiltration of Communists into the trade union movement and Federal departments.

In 1938 he submitted testimony before congressional committees on the infiltration of Communists into the trade union movement and into the various Federal government departments, supporting this testimony with voluminous records and documents.

He further called to the nation's attention the possibilities of Communists occupying key positions in the Department of State, and the Army and Navy.

President Frey was responsible for many other legislative proposals, some of which were enacted into law, and others which were rejected. The Frey Amendment to the National Labor Relations Act prevented the questioning of a trade union contract after such contract had been in existence for three months or more. This legislation saved

many organizations great sums of money in not having to defend valid contracts in effect. The work of President Frey in being responsible for the Master Shipbuilding and Ship Repair agreements, which brought into one agreement more employees than have ever been covered in the United States under one agreement, is epoch-making in American industrial relations.

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