

SAMUEL GOMPERS MILLION-DOLLAR EXECUTIVE
(Continued from Page 1)
I took the money. Stunned by the blow, I fell in a chair. My wife, all tenderness and sympathy, seeing I didn't understand, exclaimed: 'Good God, Sam, how

could you ask such a question? Don't you know I resented the insult?'

Seeing the great need for closer co-ordination in the labor movement, Gompers in 1881 helped form the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada. Five years later this became the American Federation of Labor and Gompers was elected its first president.

The AFL's membership at its founding was 150,000. Gompers was voted a magnificent salary of \$1,000 a year, but at times there was not even enough money

for office supplies. Headquarters were in an eight-by-ten shed room on the premises occupied by Cigarmakers Local 144.

Gompers carried the entire administrative load of the new federation, aided only by his children. He wrote all the copy for the AFL's first publication, the Trade Union Advocate. He was labor's voice at legislative hearings and at public and private gatherings. He went from state to state on organizing tours and assisted in a substantial way in the formation of nearly 30 international union.

In 1897 in West Virginia, he helped organize the United Mine Worker's first successful strike, ignoring a drastic state injunction because he regarded injunctions in labor disputes as unconstitutional. The most dramatic injunction case in which he was involved was the Bucks Stove and Range cases in 1908, when he deliberately violated an injunction by including the company's name on a published "unfair list." He was sentenced to a year in jail, but never had to serve the sentence because by the time the case had been appealed the whole way to the Supreme Court, the statute of limitations applied. But the six-year legal fight over the case laid the groundwork for the Clayton Anti-Trust Act which limited the use of injunctions in labor disputes.

Gompers had arrived at a definite trade union philosophy during these years. He believed that unions should use their economic power to win wage gains and improve working conditions, expending their resources only as there was a reasonable chance for worthwhile gains. He was unyieldingly opposed to alliances of labor with political philosophies or political parties.

A move at the 1903 convention to involve the AFL in the socialist movement was soundly defeated when Gompers, after declaring that he had thoroughly studied socialism and its advo-



"She learned to walk like that in our parts assembly plant."

ates for over 30 years," said flatly: "I am not only at variance with your doctrines, but with your philosophy. Economically, you are unsound, socially, you are wrong; industrially, you are an impossibility."

To those, however, who claim that these and other incidents are proof of Gompers' opposition to political action by labor, there are other episodes which reveal his real political philosophy.

"We must be partisan for a principle and not for a party," he told one AFL convention. "Labor must learn to use parties to advance our principle, and not allow political parties to manipulate us for their own advancement."

And of course, his famous dictum: "Support your friends and punish your enemies" has for many years been the political byword of the entire labor movement. AFL membership had boomed to three million by 1919 and, as Gompers had predicted, its political influence grew with its size. After the re-election of President Wilson in 1916, Postmaster General Burleson phoned Gompers to say that he, more than any other individual, had been responsible for the victory.

Under Gompers' direction, the AFL also used its influence to gain legislation providing for workmen's compensation, protection of women workers, restrictions on convict labor, mine and factory health regulations, establishment of the U. S. Department of labor and state labor bureaus, curbs on child labor and enlarging of the public school system, the last two always particular interests of Gompers.

After serving with a number of federal agencies to promote the U. S. war effort during World War I, Gompers was named by President Wilson to attend the peace conference in Versailles. He was responsible there for the creation of the International Labor Organization.

The Russian Revolution, hailed by many as "The dawn of a new day for humanity," impressed Gompers in a different way. "We shall progress by the machinery of democracy," he declared, "or we shall not progress. There is no group of men on earth fit to dictate to the rest of the world. It is this central idea of bolshevism that make the whole of it outcast in the minds of sane men."

He never deviated from this philosophy. His last words, when he lay dying in a San Antonio, Tex., hotel room on December 13, 1924, shortly after being re-elected again by the AFL, were: "God bless our American institutions. May they grow better day by day."

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