

The Greatest Failure in Labor History

By MANUEL GOMEZ.

(This is the third of a series of articles analyzing the Pan-American Federation of Labor and its recent convention at Washington.)

"Gompers Said That Pan-American Federation of Labor Might Have Life."

"SAMUEL GOMPERS," said President Green three or four times during the Washington convention, "gave his life for the Pan-American Federation of Labor." While this statement must be considered a little high-pitched to say the least, it is nevertheless true that Gompers did lavish much loving care upon it—not to say money—and that he looked upon it as one of his favorite investments. His expensive attentions were unrewarded by success. Thus far, almost any way you look at it, the Pan-American Federation of Labor is one of the greatest failures in labor history.

THAT it is a failure from an organizational standpoint was demonstrated adequately in the preceding article. In the present article I shall try to show that it is a failure from the standpoint of the everyday needs of the workers. The basis of my argument is the fact that thruout nine years since its first official convention at Laredo, Texas, the Pan-American Federation of Labor has not grappled seriously with a single practical problem of international trade-union cooperation in the interests of the workers of the Americas.

U. S. and S. A. Workers Must Unite.

WITH American capital extending its sway over all the Americas, and with Wall Street interests playing off the workers in this country against the workers in Latin America and vice versa, energetic cooperation among the various labor movements of the western hemisphere is a vital necessity. Every important struggle in the marine transport industry, in the oil industry, in the metal industry, etc., etc., makes it plain that organized labor must be prepared to take up the fight on all fronts.

JOINT strike action, international agreements, interchangeable union cards, international trade-union regulation of immigration—these are only a few of the measures that any all-American federation of labor worthy of the name would be expected to establish as a primary duty.

WHAT about the "Pan-American Federation of Labor?"

IT has never considered international agreements of any kind, let alone international strike action. The boycott, which has been used effectively in a number of Latin American countries in the past, and which would be a powerful weapon against U. S. manufacturers who export to Latin America, has also failed to find favor with the Pan-American Federation of Labor.

Fake Frey Defeats Union Card Measure.

ONCE in a convention of the Pan-American Federation of Labor, (1924), the Mexican delegation introduced a resolution calling for interchange of union cards between members of the American Federation of Labor and the Mexican Confederation of Labor, but John P. Frey at the head of the resolution committee promptly slipped in the following substitute:

"RESOLVED, That the Mexican Confederation of Labor and the American Federation of Labor communicate with their affiliated national and international unions with the object of establishing understandings and agreements which will bring about the interchange of membership cards between the unions affiliated with the Mexican Confederation of Labor and the American Federation of Labor."

THE substitute was adopted, and that is all that has been heard of the matter from that day to this.

Green Admits Delegates Represent Nothing.

AT the Washington convention just passed, one of the three or four Latin-Americans who represented some sort of legitimate labor organization introduced a resolution dealing with trade-union committees to regulate immigration. This too was immediately side-tracked by the American Federation of Labor machine.

THERE was a great deal of wordy debate at Washington, but very little to indicate that the delegates were participating in what claimed to be an international labor convention. Sometimes the thing became almost farcical. I remember that there was much excited discussion over a resolution approving the idea of continued Pan-American Federation of Labor conventions in the future. This was because one of the handpicked Latin-American "delegates" who represented nothing, except perhaps his government, saw a chance to get a permanent place on the Green-Woll payroll by attaching a rider to the effect that "in each country the organization affiliated to the Pan-American Federation of Labor be recognized as the bona fide labor movement of that country." The idea of the rider (which of course had nothing to do with the original resolution) struck many receptive cords in the convention you may be sure. Enthusiasm reached such a high point that Green was obliged to make a statement explaining that "in many

Latin-American countries the labor movement is only in its infancy and sometimes delegates come here from organizations having only a doubtful existence."

Discuss Erecting Lighthouse to Columbus!

EXCEPT for the usual meaningless resolution about sending out organizers, the only "constructive labor proposals" adopted were those recommending to some Latin-American governments the establishment of a department of Labor and the one suggesting that all governments add labor attaches to their diplomatic and consular staffs abroad. Discussion on the department of Labor proposition proved a contentious one. It seemed that some "delegates" thought that Santo Domingo, for instance, should not have a Department of Labor, but a Department of Labor and Immigration! Discussion on this matter raged so hot as to equal almost the discussion on the proposal to collect funds for a lighthouse and monument to be erected somewhere in Latin America in memory of Columbus.

Leadership Betrays Workers

IN the face of actual trade-union struggle the Pan-American Federation of Labor evinces the same attitude of quiet sabotage as displayed in its convention resolutions. During the past three years there have been important strikes in many countries of North, South and Central America, but the Pan-American Federation of Labor has turned its back on them. The executive committee cannot point to a single struggle of the workers which it has assisted in any way thruout the period of its existence.

THE "Pan-American Federation of Labor," as at present controlled, can never accomplish anything in the interests of the workers of the Americas.

READING thru any one of the long reports of the executive committee of the "Pan-American Federation of Labor" you get the impression that its conception of international labor action is for Mr. William Green to write polite letters to the President of the United States or some other government official and receive polite letters in return.

Latin Workers Smell Rat in P. A. of L.—a Skunk.

IS it any wonder then that neither William Green, nor Samuel Gompers before him, has been able to allay the suspicions of the great mass of organized workers of Latin America as to what the purpose of the Pan-American Federation of Labor really is? Is it any wonder that, except for the Mexican Confederation of Labor, not one of the basic labor organizations of Latin America has been willing to send even an observer to Mr. Green's or Mr. Gompers' conventions? Is it any wonder that the so-called Pan-American Federation of Labor does not include the labor federations of Argentina, of Chile, of Uruguay? Is it any wonder that while two handpicked delegates from non-existent organizations in Peru come to the Washington convention the bona-fide Peruvian unions stay away? Is it any wonder that Cuba, which has a relatively strong and experienced trade-union movement should be represented only by delegates from one union in part of one industry, and those delegates agents of President Machado, the bloody Wall Street-owned Cuban dictator?

IS it any wonder that the Pan-American Federation of Labor is a fraud and a fake?

AT the 1921 convention of the Pan-American Federation of Labor eight countries were represented on paper. At Washington in 1927, "nine countries were represented," also on paper. In both cases it was manifest that except for the Mexican Confederation of Labor, the P. A. F. of L. is non-existent in Latin America as far as trade-union affiliation or action is concerned. The only difference is that in 1927 most of the delegates claiming to represent Central America and the West Indies have been exposed as fakers or government agents.

THE Greens and the Wolls cannot build an All-American Federation of Labor that amounts to anything.

Peruvian Leader Jailed; Fakers At Conference.

AS I was writing the closing paragraph of this article a letter came to me from Peru bearing the news that Octavio Vargas Montjoy, secretary of the Federation of Labor of Lima (the only labor federation in the country) has been arrested by order of President Leguia and his ultimate fate is in doubt. The arrest must have taken place at the very time when the fake Peruvian "labor delegates" in Washington were lauding President Leguia to the skies as "not a tyrant but a true friend of labor!"

Can't Cash In On Geneva.

BARNSTABLE, Mass., August 4.—Rear Admiral Francis Tiffany Bowles, one of the foremost retired naval ship builders in the United States, died at his home here today. He was formerly president of the Fore River Shipbuilding Corporation in Quincy. During the world war, he was with the United States Emergency Fleet Corporation.

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