

(9) What kind of tribunal is needed, and, in particular, what principles it shall follow in making its awards, are the vital questions which remain to be decided. Though there is no room in the present paper for the discussion of these questions, it is safe to assert that the coming system is revealing its general outlines. Joint agreements, sliding scales, conciliation and voluntary arbitration will be allowed to do their full part; but there will be means of insuring peace with justice in the cases where they fail.

(10) The new condition will not put an end to socialistic agitation, but it will reconcile so many classes to the present order that the agitation will have no radical effects.

THE GROWTH OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR.

BY SAMUEL GOMPERS.

[Samuel Gompers, president American Federation of Labor; born in England, Jan. 27, 1850; cigar maker by trade; has been connected with movements for organization of working people since his fifteenth year; editor of the American Federationist; with the exception of one year has been president of the American Federation of Labor, 1882-1903; author of many articles on labor topics.]

Of the two million eight hundred thousand workmen who form the great army of trades unionism in America more than two million are affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

The American Federation of Labor had its beginning in Pittsburg in 1881. John Jarrett, president of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel workers, presided over a convention held in Turner hall November 15th of that year, at which ninety six delegates were assembled, representing union workingmen to the number of 262,000. An organization was effected, the object of which was the encouragement and formation of local, city, national and international trades unions and to secure legislation to the interests of the industrial classes. Resolutions favoring certain reforms were adopted at this initial session that were shortly made into the law of the land. One of these called for the establishment of a national bureau of labor statistics, and another protested against the importation of contract laborers.

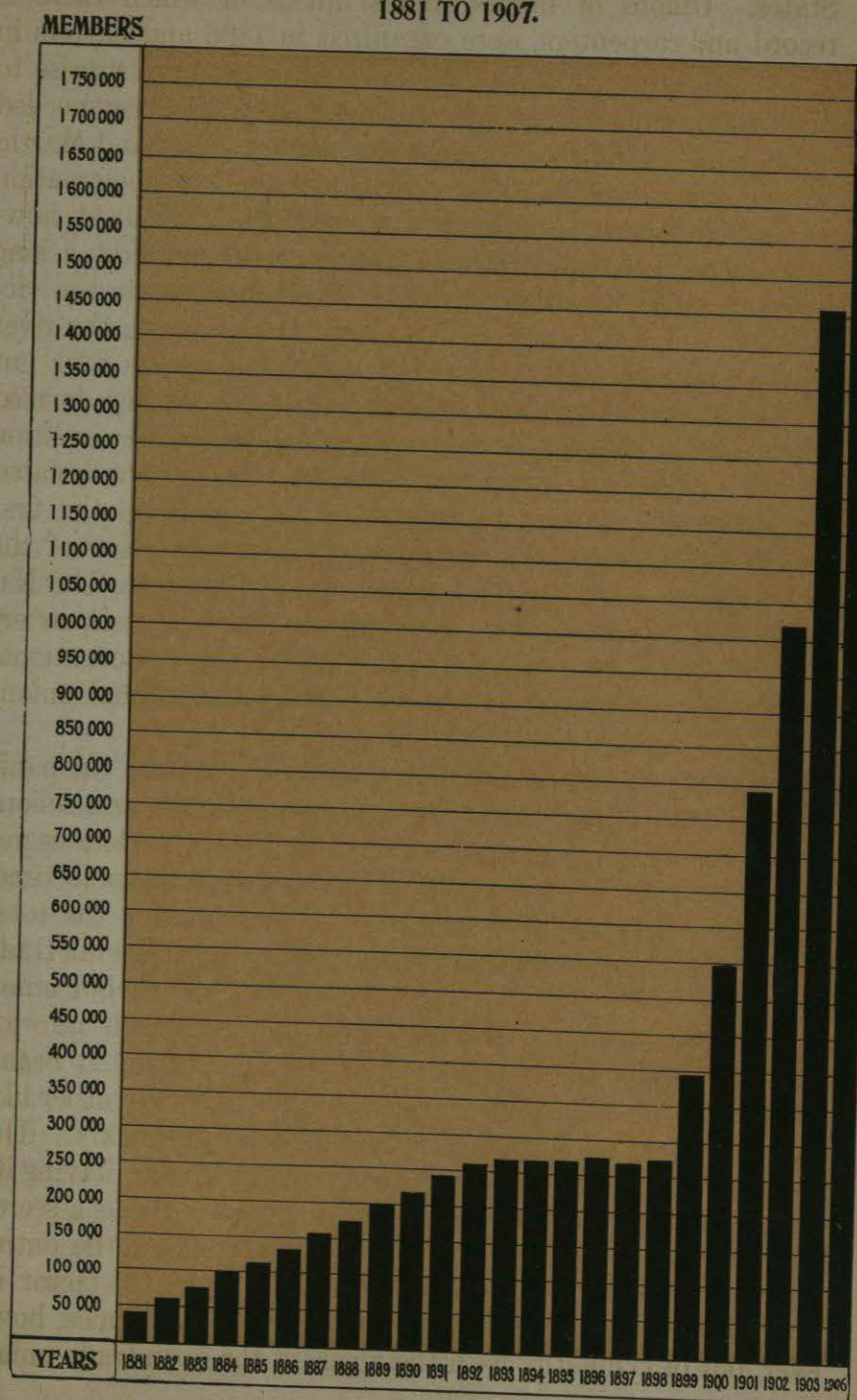
The American Federation of Labor did not spring into existence over night. Neither was it a sudden discovery. It evolved in the natural course so that when the delegates from ninety five separate and distinct labor organizations came together to form its first convention they had a knowledge gathered out of long experience just what they wanted to do. That their knowledge was sound and that they built well out of it is now apparent. Trade unions had long existed. The New York society of journeymen shipwrights was incorpo-

rated in 1803—the first regularly constituted in the United States. Unions of tailors trades unions, of which there is record and carpenters, were organized in 1806 and hatters in 1819. In those days the workday extended from sunrise to sunset and the members of those unions knew why they needed to organize. Agitation began for a ten hour day, and Martin Van Buren, president of the United States by proclamation in 1840, fixed it so for all public works. Not until 1844, however, was the day shortened to the average workman, a long series of strikes leading up to it. To commemorate the victory the shipwrights had a bell cast and erected on the river front at Fourth street, New York, which for years rang out the hour of beginning and quitting work. Unions were formed now in every manufacturing center, but until the abolition of slavery they did not pass beyond the stage of the isolated unions except in unimportant instances. In 1863 the first step in this direction was made by the organization of the brotherhood of locomotive engineers in Detroit. The National Cigarmakers' union quickly followed with headquarters in New York. The Bricklayers' and Masons' International union was formed in 1864 and a number of national unions came into being between that and 1872.

The good beginning thus made was checked by the panic of 1873 and for lack of reserve funds many of these unions died out during the long period of depression. Various secret societies took their places and held attention for some time, but soon lost their influence. The year 1872 saw the total disruption of what was the first attempt at a general trade union federation. It was known as the National Labor union and its field was politics. It was going to work its reforms by first electing a president of the United States. It began in 1866 and its life, therefore, was six years. Many other like movements were started, but ran their course quickly. The Knights of Labor was born in 1869 in Philadelphia, having its inception in a local union of clothing cutters. It was a secret organization and spread with great rapidity over the entire country and was for a long time a most powerful factor in the affairs of the workaday world. It was at all times, however, out of sympathy with the ideals of the open trade union

MEMBERSHIP, AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

1881 TO 1907.



and its decline had long set in when in 1881 the trade unions, now revived and rehabilitated through a period of prosperity, called the convention of Pittsburg that resulted in the formation of the American Federation of Labor.

Samuel Gompers was chosen permanent president at the general session of the federation held at Cleveland, Ohio. This session was marked by the indorsement of a communication from P. J. McGuire of the brotherhood of carpenters, which declared the supremacy of industrial over political questions and at the same time defined more precisely the scope of the federation. It said:

"We favor this federation because it is the most natural assimilative form of bringing the trade and labor unions together. It preserves the industrial autonomy and distinctive character of each trade and labor union, and, without doing violence to their faith or traditions, blends them all in one harmonious whole—a federation of trade and labor unions. Such a body looks to the organization of the working classes as workers, and not as politicians. It makes the qualities of a man as a worker the only test of fitness and sets up no political or religious test of membership. It strives for the unification of all labor, not by straining at an enforced union of diverse thought and widely separate methods; not by prescribing a uniform plan of organization, regardless of their experience or interests; not by antagonizing or destroying existing organizations, but by preserving all that is integral or good in them and by widening their scope so that each, without destroying their individual character, may act together in all that concerns them."

At the third session held at New York city reports were made showing the ill success attending efforts made by the federation to establish a modus vivendi with the Knights of Labor

At Chicago, the fourth session, a resolution to inaugurate a general agitation for an eight hour workday was adopted.

The fifth session was held in Washington, where the methods of the Knights of Labor in organizing rejected, suspended and expelled members and their imitation of trade marks and labels of the trade unions were the principal subjects of discussion.

At the sixth session, held at Columbus, Ohio, the title of the American Federation of Labor was adopted, and from which point the organization dates the beginning of an aggressive, firm, onward march that has not ceased since. At this session the iron molders, printers, granite cutters, furniture workers, miners, tailors, bakers, barbers, metal workers, carpenters and cigarmakers joined the federation, and together with several local and city central unions swelled the ranks to a membership of 316,469.

During the last few years the growth of the organization has gone forward by long bounds owing to the energetic methods adopted for prosecuting its propaganda, the general recognition of its merits and the momentum acquired by its long and steady progress.

The American Federation of Labor is composed of constituent and representative bodies. Of the first are federal labor unions, independent local unions and international unions. The second are central labor unions and state branches. Federal labor unions are societies formed by wage earners working at different trades and are only established where there are not enough workers at the several trades to form separate unions.

Local unions having no international unions of their crafts are composed of members working at the same trade. These are recognized and allowed to affiliate only while there are as yet too few unions of the trade to permit the formation of a national union.

The supreme power of the American Federation of Labor is vested in its convention. This is composed of delegates, one or more according to its strength, from each national or general union, the delegates having one vote for each 100 members they represent. Independent local unions and federal unions are entitled to one delegate regardless of the number of their members. City central and state bodies are also entitled to one delegate, having but one vote.

The American Federation of Labor had affiliated to it May 1, 1904, 118 international unions. These international unions have complete jurisdiction over their own trades and have 23,500 subordinate or local unions with an aggregate member-

ship exceeding 2,000,000. Besides the international unions there were affiliated to the American Federation of Labor 27,000 local trade unions and federal labor unions, 570 city central unions and thirty-seven state federations.

The revenue of the American Federation of Labor is derived mainly from a tax levied on each union. at the rate of one half of one per cent per month from each member of international unions, of 10 cents per month from each member of local and federal unions having no internationals, and of a fixed tax of \$2.50 per quarter from each city and state body. Of this, 5 cents of the 10 cents levied on members of federal unions is applied to a defence fund. The executive council has also the power to levy assessments on all affiliated unions to sustain unions engaged in industrial conflicts, the levies not to exceed 1 cent per member per week and for not more than ten weeks in each year.