

During the days of the Enclosure movement, when thousands of peasants were being driven from their little plots, and were forced to wander on the highways in search of something to do, some of them occasionally took to robbing the merchants and lords. Parliament promptly passed a law which declared that any one found on the highways without being able to prove that he was engaged in some form of useful work, was to become the slave for a term of years of the one who apprehended him. Should the "vagrant" later attempt to escape, he was to be a slave for life. This law not only would make the highways somewhat safer, but would also provide a rich source of cheap labor for the nobles. At the same time other laws prevented the farm laborers from uniting for economic purposes, and wages were fixed by the Justices of the Peace, the landowners.

This was possible at a time when Parliament consisted only of representatives of the clergy, nobility and gentry, it might be said. In the United States, where all people are "equal" in the eyes of the law and where the people elect the judges and the legislatures, no class receives any special privileges. At any rate, we are so taught, and the average American worker believes it. When the Lever Act is used to crush his strike while those sections of the Act intended to punish profiteers are declared unconstitutional, he quickly forgets about it if his favorite pitcher wins his game.

A letter written by Samuel Untermyer to the Attorney-General of New York State protesting against the action of Justice Vernon M. Davis in letting a number of self-confessed building materials dealers off with fines instead of punishing them with prison sentences should bring this matter forcibly to the attention of the workers. In his letter, Untermyer offers to resign because he feels that the action of the court nullifies the work of the Lockwood Committee. He points out that the men who were let off so easily were men of wealth and political influence who had long been open, persistent, and defiant lawbreakers; that they were shameless profiteers; that two years ago, July 1919, he had filed papers with the District Attorney against some of these very same men, but that no action was taken, and the papers "were reposing peacefully in the sacred archives especially reserved for a favored few who are apparently above and beyond the reach of the criminal law."

Mr. Untermyer is saying nothing new to be sure. He knows quite as much, for he is a part of the class that is beyond the reach of the law. Why should not the favored few, the capitalist forces, be beyond and above the law? Don't they place the judges on the bench for that purpose? And don't they place their representatives in the legislatures and in Congress to help along?

A MODEL COUNTRY

"Finland, a Model State," so runs a headline in the New York Times. Then follows a long account of the glories of Finland written by the politician-educator-editor, Mr. John H. Finley. One always suspected as much when the United States recognized it.

What are the necessary ingredients for a

"model" country? The formula is very simple, judging from Finland. Let Russia and Mexico take note. First, it is required that about 20,000 or so Socialists be murdered, the Reds of course, not the Yellows. A mistake in this case would be unfortunate. Then imprison about 30,000 or more of those who are active in the labor unions so that all the leaders will have been done away with. For methods of prison treatment Horthy may be consulted. Next the Socialist and Labor press must be destroyed and the editors imprisoned. A network of spies must be built up to prevent the spread of any ideas that might prove injurious to the "public welfare." Labor and Socialist schools must be closed, and the public schools must be used for the inculcating of "patriotism."

Such a recipe is bound to work—for the moment—and receive the blessings of America. Mr. Finley, who has done his little bit to make New York a "model" State by affirming the expulsion of teachers known to be radical, is undoubtedly capable of certifying to Finland being a "model country."

ANTI-BOLSHEVIST CRUSADERS IN THE A. F. OF L. CONVENTION

To the uninitiated onlooker the Denver convention of the American Federation of Labor that is to be held in June must be the scene of momentous decisions and startling developments. America is in the midst of an industrial crisis that has thrown millions out of employment. Practically every important labor group in the country has been brought into open conflict with its employers who hastened to utilize the favorable situation to cut down wages, lengthen hours, and force the adoption of the open shop. Almost every European country has seen revolutionary working class uprisings of greater or lesser consequence during the past year. The whole nation, in so far as it thinks at all, is vitally concerned in questions of peace and war, and even the most conservative are agitated over programs of international disarmament. It would seem that there is enough material of vital interest to the working class of this country to keep a convention healthily busy for a number of months. As a matter of fact, these problems disturb the gentlemen who are to meet in Denver not at all. There is only one important question before the A. F. of L. Shall, or shall not Samuel Gompers be the next president of the American Federation of Labor?

Important enough, surely. For Samuel Gompers truly represents the spirit and the essence of American organized labor, that spirit that answers every injustice from its masters with pleas for fair play, and submits patiently to one indignity after indignity from its courts and its legislatures, in the name of Americanism. His is the spirit that allows corrupt labor representatives to trade their unions into the hands of their enemies, that creates interfactional disputes, that make labor solidarity an unknown quantity in A. F. of L. organizations. It is the spirit that took hold of radical after radical and Socialist after Socialist, of the Johnstons and the Hayes, of the Moyers, and turned them into "sensible" trade union leaders.

Unfortunately, however, the opposition that threat-

ens Samuel Gompers is anything but revolutionary. Though it is clever enough to operate with extremely radical phrases to catch the sympathy of those who are dissatisfied with the inability of the organization to meet the present crisis with a bolder front. There is John L. Lewis, the president of the miners, a good republican and an arch-reactionary, whose only real objection to the present incumbent of the coveted presidency is that the latter is still too radical in his views. There is talk also of a dark horse to be sprung at the last moment by the railway workers who are bitter, because Gompers, whom they had foresightedly elected to the position of honorary presidency in their Plumb Plan League, has covertly attacked their government ownership plan. There are also other groups that harbor more or less serious grievances against the Grand Old Man, who are ready to support an opposition candidate, without inquiring too closely into his views, provided only that he stands a reasonable chance of being elected.

These groups, little as they have in common, are prepared, in view of their own impotence, to hand over the control of the opposition movement to the so-called Indianapolis crowd, a conglomeration of Knights of Columbus and Militia of Christ men, whose chief objection to Gompers, aside from his "radicalism" lies in the fact that he is a Jew. These gentlemen succeeded, several years ago, in electing two of their men into the Executive Committee, but up to this time there have been no evidences of a revolution in the very placid life of the A. F. of L. family. The truth of the matter is, that after all, Gompers is the most intelligent and the most efficient of the reactionary knaves who are fighting for the job, and in the end fear of their common and most dangerous foe, the radicalization of the American labor movement, will lead these gentlemen to think twice before they invoke a specter that will not down.

This fight against Gompers as the head of the American Federation of Labor is not of recent origin. For years the Socialist Party waged open war against him, with a conspicuous lack of success. By its method of boring from within it succeeded in boring men into good positions, who thereupon took up their duties as trade unionists so seriously, that they soon forgot that they had been elected for the express purpose of overthrowing the very machine of which the clever Gompers had soon made them an integral part. As good trade unionists they soon felt the necessity of delivering the goods to the rank and file that had elected them. To accomplish this laudable end they were constrained to sustain amicable relations with the very men whom they had sworn to oust. Whenever it was possible strong socialist minorities organized themselves in reactionary unions for agitation purposes, minorities that might have done useful and effective work had they concentrated less upon the winning of important offices and more upon the education of the rank and file, had they made it their business to teach the membership not that a socialist official is more honest than any other, but that their only hope for better conditions lay in the overthrow of capitalism by the working class.

So the great Socialist crusade against Gompersism

in the A. F. of L., so auspiciously begun, simply petered out. As Max Hayes, one of the White Hopes, to whom the Socialist movement looked for salvation recently said in the "Cleveland Citizen," Excepting a few occasions, the Socialists made no organized attempt to get the G. O. M., said decapitation schemes being either hatched out by disgruntled or ambitious brothers for themselves or friends on the conservative inside, and the Socialists were picked as "goats" to feel out the opposition sentiment, and not infrequently the talk was so much superheated atmosphere."

The June convention will concern itself not at all with the socialist enemies of former days. For Gompers and his worthy opponents alike have found a foe more dangerous and more deadly to their own ambitions. The restlessness that is taking hold of the membership, its vociferously expressed dissatisfaction with its leaders, aimless and headless as it may be, is a more potent force than any candidate that was ever put into the arena by the Indianapolis crowd, or by any other group. Gompers knows it. They all know it. And for this reason the Denver convention will put itself unmistakably on record as unqualifiedly opposed to bolshevism and radicalism in whatever shape or guise it may present itself.

No one knows better than we how far the membership of America's great body of organized labor stands behind the international revolutionary labor movement. But the ground has been ploughed, and the seed must be planted, by a strong, revolutionary and class conscious movement that not only knows what it wants, but is willing to work for it in the strongholds of American labor. Mr. Gompers has overreached himself. In his enthusiasm over the fray, he has given to the term "Bolshevism" a significance, that is far from repugnant to the worker whom it was supposed to terrify. The rank and file has lost its fear of revolutionary phrases. Let us make the most of it.

To the Communist Parties of all Countries

Dear Comrades:—

The Executive of the Comintern in conjunction with the Secretariat of the Womens Section of the Comintern are calling an International Conference of women workers in conjunction with the forthcoming III. Congress of the Communist International in Moscow. The Conference must prepare experimental work among women on an international scale, to define of women workers in the various countries as dictated by the international situation, and also the methods and form of work among women in connection with the fundamental task of the Communist International, viz., the unification of the proletarian forces including women workers for hastening the process of capturing the Dictatorship of the Working Class. The Executive Council of the International Secretariat for work among women therefore asks you to send delegates to the above mentioned conference. It is recommended delegates should bring with them reports in writing of the work done among women. The following is the proposed agenda for the conference:

I. The participation of women in the struggle for the capture and the strengthening of the Dictatorship of the working class; II. Methods, forms of work of the Communist Parties among women; III. The participation of women workers in the economic struggle and economic construction; IV. The International Secretariat for work among women and its problems; V. An International Congress of women organizers. With Communist greetings, The Executive Council of the Comintern, The Secretariat for work among women.